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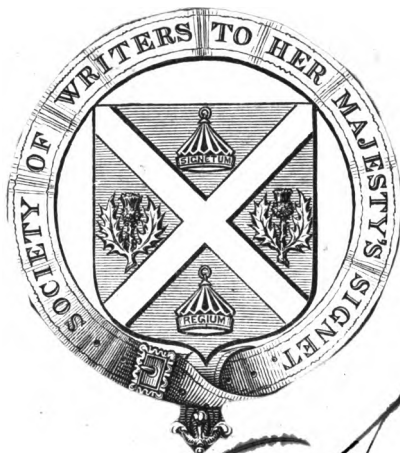


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ENGLISH PREMIERS.

VOL. II.

ENGLISH PREMIERS

FROM

SIR ROBERT WALPOLE

TO

SIR ROBERT PEEL.

BY

JOHN CHARLES EARLE,

B.A. OXON.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.

1871.

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WILLIAM PITT.

VOL. II.

B

“ With those he led Pitt is not to be classed ;
His was no blind subservience to the Past.
Not Fox himself loved English freedom more.”

LORD LYTTON, “St. Stephen’s.”

“It is singular to observe how ready some people are to admire in a great man the exceptions to the general rule of his conduct, rather than the rule itself. Such perverse worship is like the idolatry of barbarous nations, who can see the noonday splendour of the sun without emotion, but who, when he is in eclipse, come forward with hymns and cymbals to adore him. Thus there are those who venerate Mr. Pitt less in the brightness of his meridian glory, than under his partial obscurity, and who gaze on him with the fondest admiration when he has ceased to shine.”

Speech of Right Hon. George Canning.

IX.

WILLIAM PITT.

IT was on the 28th of May, 1759, that William Pitt came into the world. He was the second son of that great statesman who had just risen to the height of his fame, whose name was never pronounced by Englishmen but with admiration, nor by foreigners without fear and awe. He was by three months only the senior of William Wilberforce, who was born in August of the same year.* The nation was in continual jubilee, and many of the victories then achieved have been mentioned in a former number.† This period of glory, we have seen, was transient; Chatham's popularity waned; his majestic intellect suffered eclipse, and his bodily frame became the prey of cruel torture. Of these changes little William was faintly conscious, but being his father's darling, and possessed of a precocious understanding, he arrived, no doubt, at many secrets which would have escaped a less observant child. Certain it is, that, when only seven years old, hearing that Mr. Pitt was created Earl of Chatham, he exclaimed, "I am glad that I am not the

* Aug. 24, 1759.

† Vol. i. pp. 152—3.

eldest son. I want to speak in the House of Commons, like papa."* So early did William enjoy the advantage of having a definite purpose in life.

His mind was on a par with his ambition. All who approached him were struck by the acuteness of his remarks and the earnestness of his studies. His gravity was beyond his years; he was an adult in frocks. At twelve he had far outstripped his brother of fifteen; and at fourteen, Hayley, the biographer of Cowper, meeting him at Lyme, was so amazed at his talent that the boy seemed to him to be endowed with supernatural gifts. If he had not been so shy, he would have consulted him respecting a literary work which he was then meditating. His projected epic—to judge by his other poems—would have been no better, if as good, as the tragedy Pitt composed about this time. It was called "*Laurentius, King of Clarinium*," and was twice acted at his father's seat of Burton Pynsent, in Somersetshire. There every day the illustrious father instructed the "sweet and noble boy" in the art of oratory. There he, who of all men knew how best to rivet the attention of multitudes, gave lessons, never forgotten, in action and elocution, and instilled a taste for just emphasis and melodious cadence by causing William to recite passages from the best English poets, and particularly from Shakespeare and Milton. Of these one of his favourites was the debate in *Pandemonium*, in

* Rev. E. Wilson to Lady Chatham; "*Chatham Correspondence*," vol. iii. p. 27.

the second book of "Paradise Lost." His clear and deep-toned voice was always well managed, and he could afford in after years to be reproached by the wits of Brookes's for having been "taught by his dad on a stool."

The health of the precocious child did not keep pace with his understanding, and it was only by means of horse exercise and port wine that his strength was sustained till fifteen years of age. The tonic regimen appears to have suited him well, for at that age he acquired fresh vigour, and was little molested by sickness during the rest of his life. His early debility deprived him of the advantage of a public school, for which, generally speaking, no private tuition can compensate. A clergyman named Wilson instructed him at home, and at fifteen his knowledge of the classics and mathematics exceeded that of most men who enter at college. He was also well acquainted with the Book of Books—the inexhaustible mine of sacred lore—which his father had been in the habit of reading with him daily.*

In 1773 he was sent to Pembroke Hall, in Cambridge, where a senior wrangler named Pretzman became his private tutor. The preceptor was a sound scholar and a good geometrician. A sincere friendship sprang up between him and his pupil. Fourteen years later Pitt made him Dean of St. Paul's and Bishop of Lincoln, and when Pitt died, Pretzman, then better known as Tomline, returned these favours by writing a very indifferent life of his

* Tomline's "Life of Pitt," vol. i. p. 5.

benefactor. Being of noble birth, Pitt, according to a bad usage, was admitted to the degree of Master of Arts without an examination, and it was not till then, being seventeen years of age, that he mixed freely in the best society Cambridge could afford. While an undergraduate, his mode of life was singularly regular. His place at dinner in the public hall was never vacant. He attended chapel morning and evening unless hindered by sickness, and he never on any occasion spent an evening out of the College walls.*

Happily for him he laid in a stock of learning which the business habits of his after years would have made it impossible for him to acquire. He was charmed beyond measure with Newton's "*Principia*," and his passion for mathematics was thought even to require a check. He could not write Greek and Latin verses as fast as many who had been at Eton; his elegiacs and hexameters would have borne no comparison with those of Wellesley and Canning; but few scholars at twenty ever read "*Cassandra*," as he did easily, at first sight. Some idea may be formed of the difficulty of *Lycophron* when it is said, that he is as obscure in ancient Greek as Robert Browning is in English, and much more difficult than *Persius* in Latin. But genius dispenses with drudgery, and overcomes difficulties by intuitive perceptions. The Greek and Latin classics continued through life to afford Pitt recreation and delight. His apartments at Holwood,

* Earl Stanhope's "*Life of Pitt*," vol. i.

in Kent, and at Walmer Castle, were strewn with them ; and Lord Grenville, who was in this respect a congenial spirit, often told the Marquis Wellesley that he had never conversed with so good a Greek scholar.

It was well for Pitt that his studies were not too discursive. He paid slight attention to modern languages, and even his classical attainments were made to contribute to the purity and force of his English style. His tutors, both Wilson and Pretzman, had constantly exercised him in reading Greek and Latin authors straight into his native language, when by looking over a page or two he had mastered the sense. The habit of selecting the most suitable words thus grew upon him, and made him at last unrivalled in the extemporaneous expression of ideas. He penetrated the sense of writers so keenly that "he never seemed to learn, but only to recollect."* He carefully studied the speeches of Pericles, Æschines, and the two chiefs of ancient oratory. He analysed the arguments closely, observing their weak and strong points, and committing to memory the most telling perorations. He thus became so skilful in dialectics, that he detected fallacies in a moment, and sat as a youth, to Fox's astonishment, in the House of Lords, "thinking only how all the speeches on both sides could be answered," and evincing, by his remarks, the keen interest he took in the debates.† Intending to make politics the business of his life, it is no

* "Memoirs of Pitt," by Dr. Tomline, Bishop of Winchester.

† Lord Macaulay's "Biographies," p. 147.

wonder that he early became acquainted with Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations," in which every branch of commerce and political economy was treated as profoundly as the state of society then permitted.* In June, 1780, Pitt was called to the bar, and in August of the same year he joined the Western Circuit. In September he stood for Cambridge with ill success; but in January following, having been returned for Appleby, he took his seat on the 23rd of that month. Exactly twenty-five years after, he closed his career, and Fox, his senior by ten years, stepped into his vacant place.

Pitt began, as we have seen, with port for weakness, but he ended with weakness for port. Often after discussing a bottle at Brookes's, where Fox had proposed him as a member,† he would adjourn with his choicest friends to Bellamy's and "help finish a couple more." Every one knows Wraxall's story of his galloping through a turnpike with Dundas and Lord Chancellor Thurlow without paying the toll. The turnpike-man fancied they were highway robbers, and fired a blunderbuss at the tipsy premier.‡ He was always a fast rider, and several grooms died in his service from the effects of cold after heated gallops behind their master.§ A popular paper thus describes him in Dog Latin: "Warcarryonissimus,

* Pitt's Speech on the Budget, 1792; Goldwin Smith's "Three Eminent Statesmen—Pitt," p. 52.

† February 20, 1781.

‡ See also "Buckingham Papers," vol. i. pp. 360-1.

§ Maddyn's "Chiefs of Parties," vol. i. p. 60, note.

taxgatherissimus, vinum guzzleando potentissimus, pretty-girlibus indifferentissimus, et filius bitchædamnatissimus!"* His wit and pleasantries made him the idol of a select few ; and Wilberforce, the most intimate of them all, affirmed that he was the wittiest man he had ever known.†

Primed with wine, the young man used to rise in the House of Commons with singular composure, and support every liberal measure with all the ardour of his father in his best days. It was in this spirit that he supported Burke in his plan of economical reform ; denounced the war with America as barbarous, unjust, and diabolical ; declared himself the enemy of close boroughs and village constituencies, and advocated the shortening of the duration of parliaments. Already, according to Fox, he was one of the first men in the House. He was not, Burke said, a chip of the old block ; he was the old block itself. "The young William Pitt," wrote Horace Walpole, during the session in which he delivered his maiden speech, "has again displayed paternal oratory. The other day, on the commission of accounts, he answered Lord North, and tore him limb from limb. What if a Pitt and Fox should again be rivals?"‡ To the same effect Wilberforce wrote, "He comes out as his father did, a ready-made orator."§ Yet the rounded periods of Pitt want the incommuni-

* Maddyn's "Chiefs of Parties," vol. i. p. 68.

† "Life of Wilberforce," vol. i. p. 18.

‡ Letter to Hon. H. S. Conway, June 3, 1781.

§ Letter to Mr. B. B. Thompson, June 9, 1781.

cable fire of Chatham, and contain few sentences that have passed into proverbs, few

“Jewels, five-words long,
That on the stretched forefinger of all Time
Sparkle for ever.”

Though Burke did call the son “the old block itself,” he pronounced him on another occasion “the sublime of mediocrity.”* How he managed to pay his way with only £300 a year and a few briefs, it is difficult to conceive, except by supposing that he did not pay it at all, and that his creditors paid it for him. But, however convenient this plan may appear for a time, debts are exorbitant usurers, and they helped at last to break the heart of William Pitt.

The party to which the young statesman was attached at the beginning of his public life requires an exact description. It belonged to the Opposition, but it was not the Opposition itself. That body consisted of two sections ; the one, pure Whigs, headed by Lord Rockingham, and led by the dissipated but generous and agreeable Fox ; the other, nondescript Whigs, or Chathamites, at whose head was Lord Shelburne, and to whom, by force of early education and respect for his great father, William was allied, together with Lord Camden, Barré, and Dunning. Each of these sections came successively into power. Rockingham, with his little band, was the first who stood on the ruins of the North adminis-

* Charles Butler’s “Reminiscences,” vol. i. p. 172.

tration. He was desirous of securing Pitt's support, and offered him the easy and highly-paid office of Vice-Treasurer of Ireland. But even at that early period Pitt had resolved to accept nothing which did not include a seat in the cabinet.

The pride of birth as the son of Chatham was mingled in him with the pride of superior ability. He would be second to no man, however influential and experienced. If youth was his defect, he was willing to wait. Time would cure that failing; but it might never retrieve the false step of accepting an office inferior to his deserts. He therefore refused £5,000 a year, and declared his resolution publicly in Parliament. Many thought him arrogant, and indeed he himself repented of having expressed his intention so frankly. The doctors in scarlet at Cambridge, sitting in Golgotha, had already censured his presumption in standing for the University at the age of one-and-twenty, and his conduct on this occasion was not likely to change their opinion of him. Yet he who refuses £5,000 a year has the strength of a Titan. The reflection is obvious. Presumptuous or not, he *must* have the soul of Hercules. Thus Pitt kept the judgment of others concerning him in suspense.

It was on the 7th of May, 1782, during the second administration of Lord Rockingham, that Pitt made a motion for inquiry into the system of representation. It should have come from ministers; but since their accession to office in the month of March, their zeal for parlia-

mentary reform had cooled down in the usual way. Fox and Sheridan were the only men among them who warmly supported Pitt's proposal. Lord Rockingham, Lord John Cavendish, and the ultra-radical Duke of Richmond had suddenly been seized with fears for the safety of the Constitution; and Burke not only withheld his support, but "attacked William Pitt in a scream of passion, and swore parliament was, and always had been, precisely what it ought to be."* The division, however, was more favourable to the reformers than might have been expected. Though the motion was rejected, it was by a majority of twenty only. Fifty years passed before they had so good a division again.†

Lord Rockingham died in 1782.‡ His cabinet had lasted about three months. Lord Shelburne took his place at the head of the Treasury; and Fox and Burke having resigned, Pitt was regarded as the fittest person to supply the deficit of genius thus occasioned in the party. He had scarcely completed his twenty-third year, but his colleagues proposed to him, and he accepted, without hesitation, the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer.§ A minister of finance at such an age was a wonder among men. Adam Smith, in his person, was on the steps of power.|| He was known to be on good

* R. B. Sheridan to Fitzpatrick, May 20, 1782.

† Lord Macaulay's "Biographies—Pitt," p. 156.

‡ July 1, ætæ 52. "Lord Stanhope," vol. vii. pp. 181-2.

§ Lord Stanhope, vol. vii. p. 185.

|| Goldwin Smith's "Lectures on Pitt," p. 54.

terms with Fox, and was deputed to invite his return to the government he had forsaken. But his mediation was of no avail. Fox disliked and distrusted Shelburne. He would not act with him; Pitt would not betray him. They parted, and never met again in a private room. Perhaps they accomplished the ends of their being better apart than they could have done together. There is a gain in individual development greater than that which comes of mutual compromise.

Before the close of 1782* Lord Shelburne and his colleagues were compelled to negotiate for peace with France, Spain, and Holland, and to recognise the independence of the thirteen American colonies. Often had the premier declared that he would never do this. More than once he had said in parliament that the minister who should sign the independence of America "would consummate the ruin of his country, and must be a traitor." The sun of England, he believed, would set for ever if her Western Colonies rose into self-governed states. It is difficult to conceive how wise men could talk such nonsense, as if great nations had never flourished after dismemberment, and even derived new life from it.

Turning away from Pitt, his natural ally, Fox declined on North, a most unnatural one. Nine months before, he and Burke had threatened Lord North with impeachment, and had upbraided him as the type of imbecile and arbitrary ministers. To unite with such a statesman was

* Speech from the Throne, December 5, 1782.

to forfeit his claim to consistency, and to incur the charge of indulging private pique, and of being restlessly ambitious to regain power. He is defended on the ground of his anxiety to infuse new mental vigour into the Whigs; but his best friends allow that his conduct in this matter was deeply to be regretted. During seven years he had declaimed against the American war, and he now joined with its promoters in censuring the treaty of peace.* In January, 1783, his intention of uniting with them closely became more apparent than ever, and Pitt, who was recovering from illness, and spoke when the House was tired, lost his good humour. Forgetting how dangerous it is to attack a wit, he advised Sheridan to confine himself to the amusement of audiences at the theatre. This advice provoked an admirable retort. "After what I have seen and heard to-night," said Sheridan, "I really feel strongly tempted to venture on a competition with so great an artist as Ben Jonson, and to bring on the stage a second *Angry Boy*."† The laugh was turned against the petulant young Chancellor, and for some time he went by the name of the *Angry Boy*.

But he was not the man to be silenced by repartee. Not many days after,‡ he assailed the Coalition in all its weakest points. It was hated by the King, distrusted even by its friends, and repudiated by the people; it

* Jesse's "George III.," vol. ii. pp. 398—408.

† See Moore's "Life of Sheridan," vol. i. pp. 388—90; Ben Jonson's *Alchemist*.

‡ February 21, 1783.

stultified the personal antecedents of its chiefs ; it was an ill-omened and unnatural marriage, and if it were not yet consummated, he knew of a just and lawful impediment, and in the name of the public weal he forbade the banns. But in spite of the enormous disparity, the political lovers were pledged, and their incongruous union was duly sealed. They saw that Shelburne and his colleagues could not stand. They defeated them twice in the teeth of Pitt's strenuous resistance. They compelled them to resign, and thus stormed their way into the presence of a reluctant master. Often did the King entreat Pitt to become premier, but as often did the juvenile orator refuse. He knew how to resist importunity, and could bear to be called faint-hearted by his sovereign. His hour was coming, but it was not yet come. He grasped at no transient elevation, but aspired to a permanent seat. He had a life before him. Let Fox disport himself for an hour on the dizzy height, his partner would soon drag him over the precipice, and his fall would be great !

When did so young an aspirant for political power ever resist thus the importunities of a king ? Not satisfied with plying him through Dundas, the Lord Advocate, and Rigby, George III. wrote several times to Pitt with his own hand,* revealing his distress, and urging him to accept the premiership. Already he had sounded Earl Gower and William Wyndham (afterwards Lord Grenville) in vain ; public affairs were in confusion ; the Treaty of

* From March 23 to March 25, 1783.

Peace with France was not yet signed ;* the Treasury was locked up ; arrears of wages owed by the government were unpaid ; soldiers and sailors were in mutiny ; when two youths of twenty-four years of age each declined the service of his Majesty as premiers, and the King was compelled to write to William Pitt, saying briefly :—

“MR. PITT,

“I am much hurt to find you are determined to decline at an hour when those who have any regard for the Constitution, as established by law, ought to stand forth against the most daring and unprincipled faction that the annals of this kingdom ever produced.

“G. R.”

The Whigs, therefore, under Fox and the Duke of Portland, were installed in April, 1783, and Lord North, the former representative of absolutism and regal obstinacy, was numbered among them. He had been for many years the King's most intimate adviser and friend. He knew his master's weaknesses, and was regarded by him as a traitor. He now adopted several of Fox's axioms, maintained that no Sovereign of England ought to be his own minister, and that the King should have only the semblance of power. The Duke of Portland, whom he and Fox thought it convenient to place at the head of the cabinet, was a mere cipher, “a fit block,” as

* It was signed by Franklin, September 3, 1783, on which occasion he wore the spotted velvet coat in which he was abused by Wedderburn.—(See Diary of William Wilberforce.)

Walpole said, "to *hang Whigs* on." He had, it is true, been Lord Chamberlain in the first Rockingham administration, and had recently been Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland during five months. But in his thrifty home behind the ramparts of Burlington wall, where, crippled with debt, he lived in ducal dudgeon with half-a-dozen toad-eaters, he almost escaped the notice of mankind. Scarcely a hundred persons in England knew of his existence when he was announced as First Lord of the Treasury.* George Selwyn described his elevation in the words of the title to an old Puritan tract, as "A shove to a heavy-breeched Christian." Caricatures without number of the new ministry did honour to the pencils of Sayer and Gillray. The policy of the mongrel government was of course a jumble, a delusion and a snare. The articles of peace which they proposed substituting for those of Lord Shelburne were almost identical with the treaty against which they had blustered so loudly. They would have nothing to do with Parliamentary Reform, for compromise is the basis of coalition. The pledges Fox had given so often were forgotten, because Burke thought the representation perfect, and Lord North would not declare war against borough-mongers.

But the policy Pitt was bent on pursuing differed widely from theirs, and had a twofold aspect. He stood forth as the champion of two branches of the legislature—each, in his opinion, improperly controlled in its

* Horace Walpole's "Letters," vol. viii. pp. 261, 253, 351.

action—the King and the people. Each, he believed, was oppressed by an oligarchical tyranny of Whig nobles, who had long exercised undue sway;* who, in consequence of their wealth and influence, filled the House of Commons with their minions; who often resisted the King when he was in the right; and always discouraged the freedom of elections and the extension of the franchise.

Herein was Pitt's strength—he was doing battle for two great parties, two great principles. He was at once the friend of monarchy and of democracy. He secured the favour of the Sovereign and the hurrahs of smiths and scavengers. He assailed the strong-built fortress of Whiggery with the battering-ram of Parliamentary Reform, but he seemed to make little impression on the frowning bastions. He had supported Alderman Sawbridge's plan for shortening the duration of parliaments, and proved himself "an advanced liberal."† He had spoken in favour of Burke's Economical Reform, and advocated American independence. He proposed, in 1783, the disfranchisement of boroughs convicted of corruption practised by more than half the voters.‡ The measure was rejected of course. He strove also to put a wholesome restraint on the system of fees and perquisites, which had reached such a height that Lord North cost the country in one year £1,300 for stationery and £340

* See Jesse's "George III.," vol. i. pp. 59—61.

† Earl Stanhope's "History of England," vol. vii. p. 167; Jesse's "George III.," vol. ii. p. 418.

‡ Rose's "Diaries," vol. i. pp. 33-4, note.

for whip-cord.* Two years later he attempted an enlargement of county constituencies by the admission of copyholders, the enfranchisement of Manchester, Birmingham, and six other manufacturing towns, and the transfer of seventy-two members for thirty-six decayed boroughs to the metropolis and the counties. Nearly a hundred thousand electors were thus to be added to the electoral body, and the borough-mongers were to be so humoured that they might, if they pleased, *sell* their boroughs to the government!

But even this moderate and most conciliatory scheme was rejected like the former. The craftsmen would not part so easily with their silver shrines. In 1785 we find the King promising by letter† that he would conceal his opinion on Parliamentary Reform from all but his prime minister, and in the opening of the ensuing session he was even understood to recommend the ministerial measure to the consideration of parliament. This forbearance was praiseworthy, for the royal prejudices leaned strongly to the other side. As late as 1790 Pitt's opinion was unchanged, but he despaired of being able to rectify the existing abuses. The horrors of the reign of Danton and Marat in the French capital at a later period indisposed the country gentlemen of England to any change in a popular direction, and retarded the destined reform in our representation for many years.

* Rose's "Diaries," vol. i. p. 34.

† The King to Mr. Pitt, March 20, 1785; Stanhope's "Life of Pitt," vol. i. p. 15.

The alliance between Fox and North appeared at first to be compact and strong. But though it commanded for a time a majority in both Houses, it was soon in difficulties. The heads, indeed, of the parties were united, but the parties themselves were as hostile as ever. The absolutists and the Whigs regarded the respective chiefs of the new government as traitors, and were ready to desert them when the first favourable opportunity should occur. Oxford, which had chosen Lord North for its chancellor, and the city of London, which had resisted the court two-and-twenty years, were equally indignant. King and people, therefore, looked about for a deliverer, and it was Pitt's rare good fortune to attract the attention and esteem of both. All sides, in short, were preparing to tender him their support, and the variety of their motives only strengthened the hands of him on whom their confidence reposed. Fox and North had but to propose some important measure, and it was pretty sure that his enemies would find it full of vulnerable points.

Such a measure was Fox's East India Bill. It proposed that the power of the Company should be transferred to seven commissioners, to be nominated by parliament for four years, and then to receive their appointment from the Crown. Earl Fitzwilliam, Fox's most intimate friend, was to be chairman of the board, and Lord North's eldest son was to be one of its members. It is evident that, if this plan had succeeded, it would have thrown immense

and dangerous influence into the hands of Fox.* Commanding, as he then did, a majority in both Houses, it would have made him virtually the governor of India and the distributor of unbounded patronage. Sayer represented him, in a notable caricature, as Carlo Khan making his triumphal entry into Leadenhall Street. His face was that of North; he bestrode an elephant; and Burke, blowing a trumpet, led him to the door of the India House.† The Common Council of London petitioned against the bill, and their example was followed by other corporations. Lord Temple, afterwards Marquis of Buckingham, and eldest son of George Grenville, is pointed out in the "Rolliad" as the man who, on the 11th of December, first opened the King's eyes to the manifold mischief the bill would work.

"On that great day when Buckingham, by pairs
Ascended, heaven-impelled, the King's back stairs;
And panting breathless, strained his lungs to show
From Fox's Bill what mighty ills would flow;
Still, as with stammering tongue he told his tale,
Unusual terrors Brunswick's heart assail,
Wide starts his white wig from the royal ear,
And each particular hair stands stiff with fear."

Yet the measure certainly would have passed, had not the King, with malicious ingenuity, devised a scheme for its rejection. Never was a Sovereign more tricky and more successful. He defeated the bill, the parliament,

* See Marshman's "History of India," vol. i. p. 431; Rose's "Diaries," vol. i. pp. 44-5, 96; "Life of Wilberforce," vol. i. p. 54.

† "Caricature History of the Georges," p. 373.

and his own ministers. The message he sent by Lord Temple to the wavering peers was unconstitutional enough, but it decided them at once on the side of royalty. They thought but little about the welfare of the thirty millions of Indians who were subject to the Company, and they cared less. Their eyes were suddenly opened to the injustice of the bill, and their hearts yearned towards the greatest corporation in the empire. To violate its charter, and to substitute a board of Fox's nominees, would place in the hands of one man—and that man the King's mortal aversion—patronage enough to outweigh the Admiralty and the Treasury, and to decide the fate of fifty elections. The King's cause would prove the strongest in the end; and it were surely better to be on the winning side. Seven or eight votes would turn the fortune of the day; and when George III. himself threatened every peer who voted for Fox's bill with his personal displeasure, would it not be wiser to have an eye to the main chance—to remember that Lords of the Bedchamber could hold their places only by royal favour, and that mitres were in the gift of the Crown? An adjournment was proposed by the Opposition; and to the astonishment of all who were not in the secret, it was carried by eighty-seven to seventy-nine votes.

But the intrigue was soon bruited abroad; and the King, standing manfully to his guns, required Fox and North to resign their seals, without even admitting them to an interview. Perhaps he felt that their mere presence

would be a merited rebuke. Perhaps he remembered, with a touch of remorse, that on a former occasion,* when the repeal of the Stamp Act was agitated, he had declared to Lord Harcourt, Lord Mansfield, and the Duke of York, that he considered it improper and unconstitutional to interfere with a measure before parliament, or to allow his name to be used to bias the votes of the members. Happy is he who condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

Pitt was now premier.† Lord Temple, who had been the instrument employed for warping the peers, resigned his place in the new ministry after three days, and thereby removed from it an obvious scandal and reproach. Even those who rejoiced at the King's success were unable to justify the means by which it was brought about, and Pitt was fortunate by being able to affirm that he had no hand in the singular machination. The private virtues of George III., his urbanity and kindness to all who approached him, the concern he felt for their misfortunes, his encouragement of art and science, and the pensions he granted to men of worth and genius, contributed to secure for him the support of the people, and to establish for the Crown an ascendancy which lasted fifty years. The power of the Whig nobles as an oligarchy never returned; and when that of the Sovereign declined, it

* In 1766. See Jesse's "George III.," vol. i. p. 347, and the "Grenville Papers" there referred to.

† December, 1783.

yielded to the democratic element, which is now always acquiring new force.

The Opposition which Pitt had to encounter in the outset was formidable. Though the country applauded him, men of the richest endowments—Fox and Burke, Sheridan and North—opposed him. In sixteen divisions they defeated the government; but the intrepid son of Chatham stood firm as a cliff. The Clerkship of the Pells fell vacant; and it was worth £3,000 a year. Pitt might have appointed himself, for it was in his gift. He was Chancellor of the Exchequer as well as First Lord of the Treasury. It was expected he would avail himself of this privilege, but he generously bestowed it on the poor and blind Colonel Barré. It was a wise stroke of policy; even his enemies praised him in this matter, and none ever ventured afterwards to question his probity. Pecuniary disinterestedness is the rarest of virtues, and there is, therefore, nothing which the public appreciates more highly.

Some years later, when, owing to the King's insanity, the Prince of Wales was likely to become Regent, and to dismiss Pitt from office, he showed the same integrity and freedom from sordid ambition. The merchants and bankers of London were aware of his slender resources, and grateful for the many benefits he had conferred on commerce; and they offered most generously to present him with £100,000, that he might be raised above the caprice of fortune. This noble gift he refused without hesitation, saying to George Rose that "nothing on earth

should induce him to accept it." It was by conduct like this that he gained the esteem of persons of the highest character, such as Wilberforce and Mrs. Hannah More,* and contrasted to advantage with his dissipated rival.

The King, Lord Thurlow, and Earl Temple, were all of opinion that he should dissolve parliament immediately after taking office; but the young premier thought otherwise, and would not be diverted from his purpose. He was persuaded that if the public were allowed time to reflect, they would support his government the more firmly in the ensuing elections. He submitted, therefore, to endless taunts, to being defeated on five motions in one night, and to being triumphed over by the Opposition sixteen times between the 17th of December, 1783, and the 8th of March, 1784. Even his friend Gibbon judged his case hopeless. "Depend upon it," he said, "Billy's painted galley must soon sink under Charles's black collier."† But he was amply rewarded for his self-restraint. Leading men among the Whigs came over to his side, Lords Mahon, Mountmorres, Effingham, and Harcourt, who had all been obnoxious to the court as semi-Republicans; Mason, the Reformer and poet; the Duke of Richmond, who advocated universal suffrage; and Wilkes, once the idol of the mob, gave in their adhesion to the new minister, and were smiled upon by royalty when they appeared at the levees.

* See her "Memoirs," vol. ii. p. 140.

† Butler's "Reminiscences," vol. i. p. 161.

The majority in the House which the opponents of Pitt enjoyed for a moment dwindled down to a single vote; and the parliament being then dissolved in March, 1784, the people responded eagerly to the royal appeal, and a hundred and sixty friends of the Fox and North coalition lost their seats. Wilberforce, Pitt's best ally, was returned for Yorkshire, in spite of the strenuous opposition of the great Whig families;* the University of Cambridge elected Pitt as their representative, and at the age of twenty-five he began his reign over a vast empire. It was to last seventeen years—through nine years of peace and eight of war—to be undisputed in the cabinet, approved of parliament, applauded by the nation, and warmly supported by the Sovereign in whose name it was established and carried on. Neither Lord Chatham, Walpole, nor Godolphin had exercised such sway, nor had been able to embody so many different elements in their administration. Never was there a period in our government in which a firmer hand was required, nor one in which it was more excusable to substitute strength for utility, and to face the dangers from without, instead of correcting the evils and abuses within.

During the first half of Pitt's long administration, the country enjoyed prosperity and peace. The predictions of its enemies were falsified; the loss of the American colonies had not crippled her strength; her exchequer was not drained, nor her commerce impaired. The debt

* "Life by his Sons," vol. i. chap. iii.

which had been incurred proved, after all, but a light burden, and Pitt's dexterity made it seem lighter still. There was a deficit of three millions and a floating debt of fourteen millions. Exchequer bills were at twenty discount, and the duty on tea was so heavy that the smuggling traffic in it doubled in amount the lawful trade. The Three per Cents. had fallen to fifty-six; and the anxiety which this caused was removed by a stroke of finance worthy of a prime minister who was also Chancellor of the Exchequer. By increased taxation he raised £900,000, and at the same time he created his famous Sinking Fund.

It was an old idea of Walpole's revived. It consisted in a million per annum being laid by out of the revenue to accumulate at compound interest, and so redeem the public debt with money not extracted from the pockets of taxpayers. Of course it was a hocus-pocus, for it borrowed money to pay a debt; it *played* the debt, as Thomas Moore said, from one hand to another, instead of *paying* it; it was compound interest paid by the nation to itself;* yet it quieted the restless multitude, and hoodwinked both the friends and enemies of the government. Sheridan declared that it reminded him of the person in the comedy who asked, "If you won't lend me the money, how can I pay you?" Being found useless, it was abolished in 1829. If a portion of the public

* Goldwin Smith, "Lectures on Pitt," [p. 61; "British Empire," edited by Chambers, p. 209.

revenue be set apart to be applied to the reduction of a national debt, it is evident that some extra means must be employed to raise that portion, or that the national expenditure must be diminished; for he who is in debt can have nothing to lay by unless his income be increased or his expenses lessened.

Many of the imposts introduced by Pitt continue in force, such as the duties on game certificates, on excise licenses, and on horses; while others have been rescinded by a wiser policy, such as the window and paper tax, the taxes on candles, bricks, tiles, calico, and linen. The happiness and welfare of a people is best consulted by taxing as far as possible the luxuries, and leaving untaxed the necessities of life. The duties on tea and spirits were diminished under Pitt's administration; and thus the trade of smugglers, who numbered about forty thousand, was happily impaired. Nearly half of the national debt of fourteen millions having been funded by Pitt, he was highly extolled for this also, and described as the prince of financiers. Yet he himself defended his conduct on the plea of necessity; and while he followed the vicious examples of his predecessors, he did justice in his speeches to the true principles of finance. It was the old story of seeing and approving the better course and pursuing the worse.*

The extraordinary popularity which Pitt enjoyed enabled him not only to palm off his Sinking Fund on the

* Macaulay's "Biographies," p. 189; *Westminster Review*, July, 1862.

nation successfully, but also to adjust the India question, which Fox, through royal interference, had been compelled to abandon. He was content to enact, in the first instance, a partial change; to control the unruly Company by means of a Board; and then, at a later period, in 1786, to diminish the powers of the directors still further, by vesting the nomination of the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief in the Crown, and by uniting both these offices in one person. He thus left to the Company the semblance of power, while he gradually deprived it of the reality.* Again, in 1787, his Declaratory Bill increased the number of royal troops in India, and appropriated Indian revenue to useful purposes without asking the consent of the directors. The result of these laws was highly beneficial; and Earl Russell allows that Dundas had some reason for boasting that, before Pitt's time, we never had a government of India acting in harmony together at home and abroad on pure and sound principles.

* Marshman's "History of India," vol. i. p. 434. Correspondence of Lord Cornwallis, vol. i. pp. 211—14.

WILLIAM PITT

(continued).

**"Men praise or blame in Pitt the iron will.
Well, steel, though supple, is of iron still.
Thus will in Pitt could bend to ward the stroke;
It was by bending that it never broke."**

LORD LYTTON, "St. Stephen's."

X.

WILLIAM PITT

(continued.)

IT was the singular good fortune of Pitt to rescue his royal master from unpopularity. During the former part of his reign, the pertinacity with which the King had clung to Lord Bute, whom the people despised, the faithlessness he had shown towards his own ministers, and the plots he had laid against them and carried into effect by means of the private body-guard composed of his "friends," had lessened him in the eyes of his subjects, and neutralised to a great extent the influence of those virtues in him the reality of which no one denied.* But with Pitt's accession to power secret influence ended. He appealed from cabal and faction to the heart of the people.† He was too independent and haughty to tolerate any rivalry or mutiny. He cleared the palace of plotters, and the King became dearer to his people in proportion as the minister of his choice rose in their esteem. Morality and wisdom seemed for the time to be the special attributes of

* Jesse's "George III.," vol. i. p. 126.

† Goldwin Smith's "Lectures on Pitt."

royalty and Pitt, while dissipation and folly fell no less to the score of the Whig leaders and the Prince of Wales.

It cannot be denied that the indiscretion of these gentlemen in the regency question gave a great advantage to their more prudent adversary. They contended that the heir-apparent had, now that his father had become insane, a right to be Regent and to exercise all the prerogatives of a king; while Pitt, on the contrary, maintained that no such right existed independently of parliament, and that if the Prince of Wales were appointed Regent, his powers ought to be limited and determined by the estates of the realm. The parts taken by the two statesmen in this matter were precisely the opposite to those which they would have been supposed likely to take. Fox leaned to the side of absolutism and hereditary right, Pitt to the more popular doctrine of parliamentary authority. His conduct did not fail to procure him praise on all hands. There was thought to be something chivalrous in his thus defending an afflicted sovereign, particularly as he had everything to gain by courting the favour of the Regent. Had he been dismissed from office by his Royal Highness, nothing but poverty stared him in the face, and his disinterestedness on the occasion made his friends compare his loyalty to that of Sully and William Bentinck. There was the more reason in his resistance to the Whigs because George III.'s insanity was not likely to be permanent, or to disqualify him always for the affairs of state. He therefore proposed that the

appointments in the royal household should rest with the Queen, so that if the King were happily restored, he might not be grieved and humiliated by finding the palace, which had been remarkable for decorum and morality, filled by the favourites of his dissolute son.

There was something in Pitt's private life and character which harmonised perfectly with this concern for the excellent Queen and for the reputation of her court. Though he quaffed port as freely as Robert Hall drank tea, though in his youth he evinced great fondness for play, though he lived a bachelor all his days, and vice had not at that period ceased to be fashionable, yet his habits were highly decorous,* and it is recorded to his honour that he was not driven from them by the ridicule of less upright men. Dr. Laurence, in the "Rolliad," Captain Morris, and Peter Pindar, made his innocence a theme of mirth; but their verses served only to raise him in public esteem. He is thought to have been sincerely attached to the Hon. Eleanor Eden, but from causes now difficult to ascertain he never made her an actual proposal. Necker's daughter, it is said, and a fortune of £14,000 per annum, were placed within his reach in his twenty-fourth year, but he answered the proposal by saying, "I am already married to my country."† His niece, the famous Hester Stanhope, did the honours of his house, and enlivened its guests by the

* Goldwin Smith's "Lectures on Pitt," p. 53. See "Political Miscellanies."

† "Life of Wilberforce," vol. i. pp. 39-40.

brightness of her talents. "How can Pitt have such a spoon as this?" asked Lord Musgrave, when he was breakfasting there one day and was treated to a broken egg-spoon. "Don't you know," replied Lady Hester Stanhope, "that my uncle sometimes uses very slight and weak instruments to effect his ends?" The poets who lampooned Pitt were but few compared with those who praised him. Seldom has a minister been more loudly hymned, and seldom has "A health to the pilot who weathered the storm" been sung with heartier enthusiasm to brimming goblets than when Pitt was toasted at Tory dinners and carousals.

Yet, strange to say, he was by no means a patron of learning. He carried to excess the wise rule of leaving public opinion to decide on the merits and rewards of literary works. He withheld from men of letters those distinctions and occasional pensions which it is as honourable to the State to offer as to the receivers to have earned. He suffered Porson to become a newspaper drudge, and Gibbon a poor exile. He stretched out no hand to Johnson when expiring in Fleet Street for want of purer and softer air; and if Cowper obtained at last the solace of a pension, it was not owing to Pitt's exertion in his behalf. The Church of England has certainly some reason to be proud of Paley, but Pitt did not think him worthy of promotion. Painters, sculptors, and architects, who emerged from obscurity owed nothing to Pitt for the improvement of their fortune. With boundless means at

his disposal, his parsimony towards literary men reminds us of Louis XIV., of whom it is related that among his acts of munificence he awarded a pension of £40 to Molière during his life, and allowed his tomb after his death to be raised one foot above the ground !* “Literature will take care of itself,” answered Pitt, when applied to in behalf of Burns. “Yes,” observed Southey, “it will take care of itself, *and of you too*, if you do not look to it.”

Pitt’s failing in this respect was the more remarkable because his oratory was the fruit of genius and careful study. He never so relied on his natural abilities as to neglect secondary means, and his high position supplied whatever was wanting to make his success as a debater complete. There were points in which some of his contemporaries surpassed him—Sheridan was more witty, Burke more imaginative—but in power and ingenuity he rose above them, and found no rival but in Fox. To him, again, he yielded in kindliness of look and language—perhaps in sympathy with human sufferings and in hatred of every form of oppression. He was intrepid and proud, but noble and commanding on all occasions; severe as one who is conscious of rectitude, and sometimes sarcastic and scornful as one who can endure nothing that is crooked and low.

It was in supporting the glorious efforts of Wilberforce to suppress the slave-trade that his eloquence shone

* Victor Hugo’s “William Shakespeare,” p. 27.

brightest and fell with surest stroke. It was the 2nd of April, 1792; Grey, Windham, and Fox were walking away together from the House of Commons, and, still under the magic influence of his periods, they discussed the merits of his high-souled appeal. On this they all agreed, that they had never before heard such oratory, and that during the last twenty minutes Pitt seemed inspired.* There is no more happy faculty in a speaker than that of seizing impromptu on some passing occurrence, and applying it to illustrate his main argument. It was long past midnight. Pitt had been describing in pathetic language the dark and servile condition of Africa, and had expressed sanguine hopes of its being yet visited by the light of religion, civilisation, and science, when the first ray of the morning broke through the windows of the House of Commons, and with admirable readiness he pointed to that beam, and quoted those apposite lines from the "Georgics":

"Nos primus equis Oriens afflavit anhelis,
Illic sera rubens accendit lumina Vesper."†

His hopes, his prospects, his prediction were all summed up in this beautiful poetry; and as he turned his face towards the south, the hearts of his hearers bounded across intervening seas to embrace as freedmen and brethren the swarthy children of Ham. A motion for gradual abolition was carried "against the united forces of Africans and

* "Life of Wilberforce by his Sons," vol. i. pp. 345-6.

† Book i. 250, 251. See Moore's "Life of Sheridan," vol. ii. p. 185.

West Indians," by a majority of 238 to 85. This was a great step in advance.

It was in the year 1792, and within five months of each other, that two ex-premiers, once powerful and in high favour, departed this life. One was John Earl of Bute,* and the other Frederick Lord North, then third Earl of Guildford.† The former had during a quarter of a century lived in profound retirement, and spent the greater part of his time in a villa on the cliff's edge at Christchurch in Hampshire. There he used to listen to the melancholy murmur of the sea, and hear in it the soul's moaning over the vanity of human affairs.

The good-humoured premier whose short-sighted policy severed America from England was, during the last five years of his life, afflicted with partial blindness from paralysis of the optic nerve. But his inner day never died; and he continued to the last patient and cheerful. Not long before his death, he met the old and blind Colonel Barré on the Pantiles at Tunbridge Wells, and gaily observed: "Ah, Colonel, whatever may have been our former animosities, I am persuaded there are no two men who would now be more glad to *see* each other than you and I."‡

The generous rivalry which existed between Pitt and Fox did not prevent their uniting on many important questions. They advocated with equal warmth the cause

* Died March 10, 1792.

† Died August 5, 1792.

‡ Wraxall's "Memoirs," vol. ii. pp. 136-7.

of the marketed negro ; they pleaded side by side for the relief of Roman Catholics ; they contended together for the extension to juries of the same powers in cases of libel as in criminal proceedings, thus placing the liberty of the press under their protection ; and they inveighed with one voice against those "iniquitous laws" in the Statute-book "which attach penalties to mere opinions." It cannot, indeed, be maintained that Pitt was always consistent, nor can we do otherwise than lament his yielding, against his better judgment, to pressure from without in supporting the Test and Corporation Act. Sir Robert Walpole before him had acted much in the same way, and the generous efforts of Lord Stanhope in 1719 had proved equally abortive.* That he was personally averse to the exclusion of all but members of the Established Church from offices of State is certain from the fact of his having in private laid before George III. "unanswerable reasons for abolishing it."

The great question on which Pitt and Fox differed was the expediency of war with France. Yet this difference supervened upon previous agreement. In 1790 Pitt predicted that the convulsions in France would sooner or later end in order and peace. In February, 1792, he declared to the House that, judging from the condition of Europe, there never was a time when a long peace might more reasonably be expected.† The policy which he re-

* Lord Stanhope, "History of England," vol. i. p. 327 ; vol. ii. p. 185 ; vol. iii. p. 103.

† Speech on the Budget.

commended was that of strict neutrality. He contemplated a reduction of the war establishment in June, and in October and November he still dwelt on the advantages of non-intervention. As late as the 29th of December he maintained that war might be averted, and nothing transpired which could cause men to suspect that his private feelings had undergone a change. All was of a piece with his attempt to introduce a commercial treaty between England and revolutionary France—an attempt which brought upon him the bitterest reproaches, and was thought likely by many to disturb the peace of his father's bones. His favourite plans of economy and of finance, his project for increasing the revenue by increasing consumption, for reducing the taxes and for improving commerce, were evidently based on the expectation of peace. He would leave France to arrange her internal affairs after her own fashion—this was his uniform language, whether in the House or in his private correspondence.

But January, 1793, arrived—that tragical month which saw the blood of Louis XVI. poured forth on a scaffold; and those red drops were the first of a shower of blood which fell on the soddened plains of half Europe during many years. Pitt's policy changed. Up to the moment when the result of Louis XVI.'s trial was made known, he advised the other powers of Europe to preserve peace; after it, he no longer did so. On the 20th of January his resolution to declare war was avowed. A

party of the Whigs sided with him. On the 24th the French Ambassador was informed that the King refused to receive his credentials, and on the 1st of February the Convention, anticipating the English premier, declared war against Great Britain. The die was cast, and the people of England in general gladly accepted the terrible alternative. The animating principle of the struggle in which they engaged was the defence of hereditary right, and resistance to the principles of the French Revolution.

Fox is said to have acknowledged on his death-bed that Pitt had really no alternative but to make war; and Sir Cornewall Lewis* believed that a mere recognition of the French republic would not have prevented the Convention from commencing hostilities, unless England had declared herself friendly to the principles professed by the members of that body. Samuel Rogers declares in his "Recollections"† that the war was forced on Pitt; but Wilberforce, though he maintains that "we were not the assailants, and therefore the conflict was just and necessary," adds nevertheless, that "the ministry had not taken due pains to prevent its breaking out."‡ A variety of circumstances make it evident that, if Pitt was not the first actually to make war, he had latterly led up to it, and made it necessary for the Convention to

* "Administrations of Great Britain," p. 138.

† Page 189.

‡ "Life of Wilberforce," vol. ii. p. 11.

declare it, or to abandon altogether the position which they had taken.*

To some persons Pitt's conduct in this matter appears laudable, to others it seems to need excuse. The most moderate men, however, on all sides allow that he might at least, by a longer exercise of forbearance and prudence, have postponed the hostilities he at last invited. If his grand object was to crush the hydra-headed spirit of democracy rampant in France, he should have waited for some distinct and daring act of aggression on the part of the republicans against England. He would then have had the support of all parties, Fox included, and would have faced the foe with tenfold strength. By provoking the French he only stimulated their fierce enthusiasm, and saw within a twelvemonth more than a million of them rush to arms. He knew little or nothing of the Continent, having crossed the Channel but once during a vacation, and his powerful mind was by no means richly endowed with experience in the ways of the world.† Great as was his capacity for government in time of peace, he appears to have been incapable of calculating the military resources and prowess of France as contrasted with the diminutive war establishment of Great Britain. He fondly expected a prompt and easy victory, though warned of his error even by Burke, by Lord Stanhope, and M. Bigot de St. Croix, who had formerly been

* Jesse's "George III.," vol. iii. p. 196.

† "Life of Wilberforce," vol. ii. pp. 92-3.

Minister for Foreign Affairs in France. It was not long before the English army was laughed at by all Europe; and though always remarkable for courage, it proved as ill-trained and ill-provisioned as in our own day in the Crimea; while in a few years the martial power of France, so far from being abashed, had planted its foot on the necks of the proudest and the most ancient of European sovereignties.

Pitt's change of policy as regards foreign affairs produced a corresponding change in his administration at home. The premier no longer appeared as the warm advocate of reform, and several of his measures were severely repressive. The state of the country was thought to justify prosecutions for political opinion, of which we should now be ashamed.* Muir and Palmer were sentenced to transportation for an offence so slight that it could scarcely be called a misdemeanour; yet Pitt did not even in private express any disapproval of the penalty which these men were to endure—the one during fourteen, and the other during seven years. A Traitorous Correspondence Bill was passed; and Pitt did not oppose the clause which provided that an offender might be hanged, drawn and quartered, without being furnished with a copy of the indictment, or permitted the means of defence. To advocate Parliamentary Reform was called sedition; small householders were termed the rabble;

* See Lord Cloncurry's "Personal Recollections," and Castlereagh's "Memoirs," vol. i.

and a Lord Justice maintained that the landed interest only had a right to be represented, and that those who taught the contrary ought to be hanged or thrown to wild beasts.

The law of constructive treason, Lord Campbell says, was intended to extinguish all political agitation, and to bring under the head of criminals persons whose intentions were benevolent and honest, and who advocated moderate changes by constitutional means. Attempts were made to bring Lord Stanhope, Horne Tooke, and Thelwall within its scope; but even George III., who certainly cannot be accused of over-indulgence to liberals, exclaimed against it to his Chancellor. "Constructive treason won't do, my Lord," he said; "it won't do. You have got us into the wrong box."

Such were some of the repressive measures which Pitt countenanced. He had it in his power also to put down the Orange atrocities in Ireland, but he did not put them down. He might have encouraged Irish trade without hampering it with invidious restrictions;* he might have promoted reform in the Irish parliament instead of stirring up the Peep-o'-Day Boys and the United Irishmen; he might have kept aloof from a shameless system of bribery and corruption; and by concessions more important than those of the Catholic Relief Bill of 1793, he might have averted the conspiracy of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, the rising of 1798, the burning and savage

* Smiles, "History of Ireland," p. 386.

slaughtering of the insurgents by the Orange yeomanry, and the fierce reprisals, of which Scullabogue was but a sample.

The close alliance of a constitutional government, like that of England, with continental Powers intolerant of any limit to absolute rule, was unnatural, and involved Pitt in consequences unfavourable to the freedom of English subjects. The Allies, moreover, were bent on spoiling France and aggrandising their own dominions—an object by no means in accordance with British interests. It was a small matter to Pitt that he should be held up to execration in France, and that every species of infamy should there be laid to his charge. He accounted it an honour to be accused by them of suborning assassins to put an end to Lepelletier and Robespierre, of corrupting the Gironde, hiring the murderers of September, and perpetrating by means of his tools the horrors of the Reign of Terror. Citizen Garnier proposed in full Convention,* that Pitt should be decreed the enemy of the human race, and that every one should be at liberty to slay him. As fast as one party rose to power in Paris, it ascribed the atrocities of its predecessors, and the calamities which they had caused, to the fiend who directed the counsels of the King of England. He could afford to treat such libels with silent scorn; but it would have been well if he had been raised equally high above the animadversions of foes at home.

* August 7, 1793.

So far as he was concerned, the holy war against infidelity and democracy effected nothing, and brought us to the very verge of defeat and surrender. It taxed the "mute and unresisting" generations to come, and burdened the country with "six hundred millions of irredeemable debt."* It spread the Revolution to Belgium and Italy, and wasted English gold on weak and faithless allies. It subsidised Austria, who deserted us, with four millions and a half; and Prussia, who cheated us, with £1,200,000. Mutual jealousies proved more powerful than the common cause. Prussia withdrew because Austria was likely to be the gainer, and Spain was alarmed by the growing strength of the British navy. The first coalition melted away; and Pitt, three years after he had formed it, was ready to come to terms with France, to admit her conquests, and to leave her Holland and Belgium as the price of reconciliation. The second coalition ensued, augmented the French power under the Consulate, and closed with the peace of Amiens.† The third had no better result, and terminated with the defeat of the Allies at Austerlitz.‡ Napoleon and the empire triumphed, and disasters befel us everywhere except on the sea and the sands of Egypt.

Failure, it is true, is not in itself an argument against a good cause and a conflict carried on under a sense of duty; but failures so signal and numerous as those which Pitt

* Goldwin Smith, "Lectures on Pitt," p. 61.

† A.D. 1802.

‡ A.D. 1805.

incurred may well lead us to inquire whether the counter-policy of Fox, consisting in armed arbitration abroad, mutual concessions and mutual securities, with the redress of grievances nearer home, might not at least have been tried before the nation was committed to war with the French republic. I have endeavoured without prepossession to state plainly the *pros* and *cons* of Pitt's war policy, well knowing that it is a subject on which the minds of Englishmen will be divided to the end of time.*

There was a period when almost every voice in England was loud in his favour. The eloquence of Fox lost its spell when employed in remonstrating against an anti-jacobin war. His followers dropped off one by one, and his party in the House of Commons dwindled from a hundred and sixty to fifty. Ten or twelve Peers only adhered to his side; and when Pitt stepped forward reluctantly to head an army of orthodox Conservatives against the hosts of the infidel, he was hailed as a mighty deliverer, and France was expected to quail before him as she had quailed before the genius of his father.

But in his war administration his talents were sadly inferior to those of Chatham. Victory is not an heirloom; neither statesmen nor princes can conquer by legitimate descent. The elder Pitt was essentially a war minister; the younger Pitt was a minister of peace. In 1792 he had reduced the army to 18,000 men, and

* Rose's "Diaries," vol. i. pp. 133—191.

his army estimates were only £1,800,000.* The spell of peace was broken against his will. His armaments were completed on a paltry scale, though he was backed by the sympathy and support of nearly the whole nation. Immense sums of money were squandered by him to little effect, and he met the impetuous shock of the French enthusiasts with a handful of men. During eight years his dulcet eloquence on the boards of the House of Commons predicted the speedy ruin of the exhausted Republic, as if rulers without principle, and soldiers without coats or shoes, were to be stopped in their career of triumphant plunder by the necessity of issuing assignats not worth a *sou*.

It was the fear of their pernicious principles extending to England which led him into a system of intimidation at home scarcely warranted by the state of society. Never had the nation been more loyal, and never had a prime minister less reason to apprehend revolution or to punish with severity the peaceable expression of opinion. The Seditious Meeting Bill, the long suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, the Alien Bill, and the prosecutions for libel, accompanied with penalties for treason, are defended by Pitt's partisans as needful during a crisis. Yet to every impartial observer they seem to require excuse, especially when we consider that they suppressed the very opinions which Pitt himself had once advocated, and foreclosed the very discussions which he had often

* Goldwin Smith on "Pitt," p. 75.

been the first to open. It was certainly hard to send aliens out of the country on bare suspicion without any trial, and a government which is permitted so to act is sure to have an army of spies in its pay. To persecute is generally to propagate; and when a conceited spark could not talk a little republicanism in an alehouse without danger of being arrested for treason, when a public meeting could not be called to petition parliament about very rotten boroughs or very heavy excise without the chairman being likely to be indited for sedition,—there is reason to suspect that disaffection spread more freely than it would have done if republicans and reformers had simply been laughed down and argued down by staunch supporters of Church and State. The existing laws of England firmly applied would have sufficed to put down all serious irregularities without the re-issue of old and barbarous edicts. But it was Pitt's misfortune and error to be severe on those from whom little was to be dreaded, and languid in opposing the Jacobins abroad, from whom soldiers and society alike had so much to fear.

There is one part, however, of Pitt's administration which deserves the highest encomium, because it proves his love of justice, and his courage in enduring obloquy in a righteous cause. It is curious, indeed, to remark how posterity has praised him most for what in his lifetime brought disappointment and pain, while the measures for which in the days of his popularity he was most loudly extolled are now generally censured or feebly excused.

Catholics in particular owe him a debt of gratitude, for he stood forward as the advocate of their rights at a time when their friends were few. He sanctioned the bill passed through the Commons by Wilberforce in 1797 for enabling Roman Catholics to serve in the militia. But the measure was feebly seconded in the Upper House, and was thrown out because Protestant Dissenters also were to be allowed to fight and die for their country.*

Neither from the King, the Lords, nor the people could he expect any support in pleading for those whose loyalty was suspected and whose religion was hated and despised. Yet the miseries and wrongs of Ireland touched his heart, and while he sought to unite that country more closely with England, he saw clearly that such a union, to be permanent and satisfactory, must be based on a better distribution of justice in ecclesiastical matters. The Duke of Somerset, Sir William Petty under Cromwell, and William III. had all seen the advantages that would result from the union of the sister isle; but they were unable or unwilling to propose the needful concessions. The Protestant ascendancy was still rampant in Ireland; but it was unchecked by any imperial control; Roman Catholics were excluded from the Irish parliament; and the two parliaments, being independent, formed, in fact, two sovereign powers ready at any moment to diverge on questions of vital importance,

* "Life of Wilberforce," vol. ii. pp. 222-3.

and yoked together in doubtful union by a system of shameless corruption only.*

On the 31st of January, 1801, Pitt addressed a letter to the King, in which he officially unfolded his plans.† The general tenor of the document may be expressed in the following terms: "Your Majesty will perhaps be alarmed by the nature and extent of the measures by which I would propose completing the union of Ireland. The war in which we have so long been engaged has made Roman Catholics our natural allies. We fight with a common enemy, and thus their cause is ours. Injustice and cruelty have marked the government of this country as regards Ireland during several ages, and we are still smarting under the effects of the rebellion of 1798, which we might have averted by more lenient laws. It will be well not to promote another outbreak, nor to tempt Irishmen to look to France for protection and sympathy. The surest foundation for your Majesty's throne is in the hearts of loyal subjects. The Irish regiments fight well for England; let us attach Irish civilians as warmly to our cause. They are a people highly susceptible of favourable and unfavourable impressions; but he who meddles with their religion touches the apple of their eye. Let us cease to treat them as a conquered race. Let us remove from them that odious ban which excludes them from offices of State because they worship God according

* Goldwin Smith, "Lectures on Pitt," pp. 62-3.

† Right Hon. George Rose's "Diaries," vol. i. p. 303.

to the tradition of their fathers. Let us substitute for the old parliament in College Green a parliament in Westminster, where their representatives, of whatever creed, will find a place. Let us maintain their clergy by a moderate allowance, and thus convert disaffected pastors into loyal citizens, and relieve their flocks of the onerous necessity of supporting a religion in which they do not believe. By these means prejudices will be softened, landlords and tenants reconciled, races amalgamated, commerce improved, and treason averted."

The arguments which the premier laid before the King had obtained the consent of the majority of his colleagues;* and as he had given the Catholics of Ireland reason to expect some concessions in consequence of the Union, he felt himself bound to redeem his pledge. He intimated plainly in his letter his intention of resigning in case his proposal did not meet with the royal approbation. Unfortunately George III. had already been apprised of his minister's intentions by Lord Loughborough, a notorious schemer;† and his original aversion to Catholic emancipation was increased by the slyness of his cabinet in concealing their designs so long from him. Not for one moment did he entertain the thought of compliance. He was possessed by a strong conviction that to do so would be to violate his coronation oath; and it was the Duke of

* Rose's "Diaries," vol. i. pp. 302—397.

† "Life of Wilberforce," vol. i. p. 115; Lord Malmesbury's "Diaries," vol. iv. p. 3; Jesse's "George III.," vol. iii. p. 72, note, and pp. 420-21.

Portland's opinion that he would suffer martyrdom rather than yield. He could exchange, he said, his throne for a cottage, or lay down his head on a block, if his subjects required it, but he could not, and would not, forfeit his pledges and make shipwreck of a good conscience.

Such firmness would have been most praiseworthy in a righteous cause: the general voice of Englishmen now pronounces it senseless obstinacy; and even Mr. Croker, the editor of the *Quarterly Review*, wrote, several years after the Catholic Emancipation Bill had been passed: "We take this opportunity of repeating our solemn admonition that, until State provision for the Roman Catholic clergy in Ireland be made, that country never can be reclaimed from the political disaffection, the religious bigotry, and the Celtic barbarism, which are the real causes of all her material as well as her moral miseries."* Earl Russell, though he was the author of the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, has lately laid bare in a forcible manner the injustice of the present distribution of Church property in Ireland, and has proposed remedial measures,† which deserve the closest consideration.‡

It was in vain that Dundas, Pitt's right-hand man, tried to explain the matter to George III. He was desired to keep his Scotch metaphysics to himself; and the King, relying with confidence, unfortunately too well

* See *Quarterly Review*, June, 1845, and January, 1868, p. 282.

† Written 1867.

‡ Preface to Speech delivered in the House of Lords, June 24, 1867.

founded, on the support of parliament, wrote immediately to Addington, informing him of the letter which he had received from Pitt. His own opinion, he said, was "most completely and unalterably formed," and he therefore desired the Speaker's presence as soon as possible, and in his walking dress. A correspondence followed between the King and the premier, which issued in Pitt's retirement, and the appointment of Mr. Addington as head of the new cabinet in March 1801.*

He was then in his forty-fifth year, and was the son of a rich physician, who at one time kept a private lunatic asylum at Reading, and who dabbled in politics as eagerly as in drugs. He was the medical attendant and friend of Lord Chatham, with whom he lived in great intimacy. Owing to this circumstance, a friendship sprang up between their sons, each of whom, though they differed so widely in their social position, was destined to become premier. William Pitt and Henry Addington both entered at Lincoln's Inn, and they ate commons at the same table.† Seated in parliament, Addington declaimed in oily periods against the Fox and North coalition, and, together with William Wyndham Grenville, afterwards premier, he opposed Fox's India Bill. Many crumbs of comfort fell to his share in the way of official emolument, till at last he was chosen to succeed Mr. Grenville, who

* Rose's "Diaries," Saturday, March 14; Sunday, March 15; and Monday, April 6. See also Tuesday, February 24, 1801, vol. i. p. 316.

† "Public Characters." 1801. Second edition, p. 5.

soon after became Lord Grenville, as Speaker of the House of Commons.* He acted uniformly with Pitt, except as regards the Slave Trade, on which question he broke his customary silence, and sided with Mr. Dundas (afterwards Lord Melville) in excusing the traffic in human flesh and blood. His plea for gradual emancipation brought him into collision with Fox and Wilberforce; and it was not without many jeers and misgivings that the nation saw Henry Addington leap by royal favour from the Speaker's chair to the Treasury Bench. Like the Marquis of Rockingham, the Duke of Grafton, and the Duke of Portland, he became prime minister without having filled an office in any cabinet.

The new ministerial appointments were gazetted on the 17th of March, but in the meanwhile a circumstance deserving notice had occurred in Pitt's history. In the interval between his resignation and Addington's becoming premier the King's mind had been greatly disturbed. The Prince of Wales spoke of him with his usual levity as "Plus fou que jamais." On his Majesty's recovery, he ascribed his own illness distinctly to Pitt's agitation of the Catholic claims, and when this was reported to his great minister, the latter, without delay, determined to abandon all idea of emancipating his Catholic fellow-countrymen. He sent the King, accordingly, by Dr. Willis, a distinct promise to that effect, declaring that he

* Public Characters of 1800—1801: "Mr. Addington," p. 7, "Lord Grenville," p. 418.

would never again moot the question, whether in or out of office, during his Majesty's reign.*

The way, therefore, was now open for Addington to retire, and for Pitt to return to the head of the government. But "the Doctor" (as the Speaker was nicknamed, partly because he had recommended the King a pillow of hops during his sickness) would not so easily give way. He was vain and self-confident; his relations encouraged his thirst for office; and as he would not be the first to draw back, so neither would Pitt nor the King say one word to induce him to do so. Pitt engaged, on the contrary, to support Addington's administration, and parted from his Sovereign on the best possible terms.

* Lord Colchester's "Diaries," vol. i. p. 255.

PITT AND ADDINGTON.

“ If the health and the strength and the pure vital breath
Of Old England at last must be doctored to death,
Oh, why must we die of one doctor alone?
And why must that doctor be just such a one

As Dr. Henry Addington ?”

“ The Grand Consultation ”—CANNING’S Poetical Works, p. 37.

“ Sidmouth, though low *his* head is laid
Who call’d thee from thy native shade,
And gave thee second birth ;
Gave thee the sweets of power and place,
The tufted gown, the gilded mace,
And rear’d thy puny worth ;
Think how *his* mantle wrapp’d thee round.”

CANNING’S Poetical Works, p. 47.

XI.

PITT AND ADDINGTON.

IT is not easy to imagine a more striking contrast than that between Pitt and his successor as prime minister. They could hardly be called rivals. Addington was as commonplace as Pitt was superior to other men. "Pitt is to Addington as London to Paddington," said the lines which passed into a proverb. The new premier had been chiefly remarkable for his urbanity and good sense in the discharge of an office which requires both—that of Speaker of the House of Commons. He took no part in the debates, and speakers on either side deferred to him with equal respect. But when he was obliged to stand alone, and take a decided line, his helplessness became apparent to every one except himself. As a war-minister he could scarcely be inferior to Pitt. In all other matters the poverty of his talent was deplorable, whether compared with that of his predecessor or not. "He was only remarkable," Sir Henry Bulwer says, "for *not* being remarkable, whether for his qualities or for his defects, being just that staid, sober sort of man who,

respectable in the chair of the House of Commons, would be almost ridiculous in leading its debates.”*

The cabinet he formed ran no risks in consequence of the genius of its members. They were all safe men, if safety consists in being unable to create, or to meet, great occasions. They were barren in oratory at a time when parliamentary debates were most brilliant, and fruitless of resources in a crisis when unusual sagacity was required. Sheridan complained, with equal force and humour, that the brains of the cabinet were knocked out; that “this empty skull, this skeleton administration, was the phantom which was to overawe our enemies and to command the confidence of the House and the people.”

Pitt promised, however, to support the peace administration, for he was unwilling to lose entirely his hold on the helm of State. He kept his word, to the King’s great satisfaction, and for a time his helping hand steadied the feeble premier in his pride of place. Yet such was Addington’s vanity that he took credit to himself for that transient success which was owing to the forbearance and countenance of his more powerful friend. To the King he was extremely obsequious, and George III. had a decided partiality for contracted foreheads. It was difficult to get the Pitts and the Foxes to run on the narrow gauge. For a short time, as we learn from Canning’s songs, it became the fashion to praise moderate talents and moderate measures. Honest intentions were thought

* “Canning,” Parts i.—ix. p. 232.

to make these the best for England's welfare, and Addington's career as premier derived some lustre from the success of Sir Ralph Abercrombie in Egypt, and of Lord Nelson at Copenhagen. His repeal of the war-tax also, consequent on the Peace of Amiens, was highly acceptable to the nation ; opposition seemed dying away, and the fates did homage to his ascendant star. Many were tired of war, and welcomed a peace even with France. The blood-red fury of the Jacobins had exhausted itself, and hopes of a reaction in favour of law, order, and justice were sanguinely entertained. The opposition raised to the ministry by Grenville and Windham was feeble ; and if Pitt had only continued to throw his ægis over Addington, the very defects of his puppet would have counted in his favour.

It was not in the nature of things that such an alliance should last long. Pitt pined for power. It had become a habit to him, and had a charm above all other habits. When he found that he was less frequently consulted by the image of power which he had set up in the person of Addington, he felt that indignation which is natural to superior minds under such circumstances. His coldness and reserve became manifest, though he was careful to conceal his wounded feelings. To betray them would have been undignified and indecorous. He retired into the country, and overlooked various provocations. An article in the *Times*, in which Addington was thought to be concerned, angered him extremely. It charged him

with skulking from office in the hour of danger, and abandoning his Sovereign in a disgraceful manner. This was equally unjust and offensive; yet Pitt continued to visit Mr. Addington occasionally at Richmond,* and awaited the moment for yielding to the importunity of the friends who urged him to return to power.

Among these none was more remarkable than George Canning, and none served him with more fidelity and talent. The lively verses in which he ridiculed "the Doctor" were very telling, and aided even more than his vigorous speeches in shortening the premier's ministerial existence. It was no easy matter to induce Pitt to withdraw the promises of support which he had given to Addington and to the King; but it was something to obtain from him, as Canning did, an admission that the time had arrived when it seemed to be his duty to resume his former position. So far he went, but he could not be prevailed on to go farther. He even protested against a memorial being drawn up and presented to the prime minister, by his confidential adherents, requesting him to resign for the good of the country, and to give way to Pitt.† In vain also Canning pressed him with the argument, that Addington himself had on one occasion declared that he held office only as a *locum tenens* for Pitt.‡

* Rose's "Diaries," vol. ii. pp. 27-8.

† Lord Malmesbury's "Diaries," vol. iv. p. 115.

‡ See *Edinburgh Review*, July, 1847, p. 91.

"I like your general account of Pitt," Canning wrote to Lord Malmesbury,* "but not the particular expression of his wish for a long period of inaction. Sooner or later he *must* act, or the country is gone. All the appearances of the present moment, I am persuaded, are false and hollow. The tone is assumed but to answer the pressure of the moment; and nothing is really at bottom but concession—concession—concession. Will Pitt be thus satisfied? God forbid!

"G. C."

Meanwhile the horizon darkened. Napoleon's language grew menacing, and the public had no confidence in any one but Pitt. He alone was accounted a match for the genius of Bonaparte; and the President of the Council, the Duke of Portland, who believed himself to be dying, addressed an earnest letter to the King, entreating him to recall Mr. Pitt, as being "beyond all comparison the fittest man to be at the head of the government in times of difficulty or peril." The reverses which had befallen the British arms under his administration had not disabused men of the idea that he alone could stem the aggressions of France.

What was clear to all men besides was invisible to Addington. He even proposed, through Dundas, recently created Viscount Melville, that Pitt should share with him the secretaryships of State, or take the Ex-

* December 14, 1802.

chequer if he preferred it, while Lord Chatham or some other cipher should head the cabinet.* What a proposal to one who had been during seventeen years prime minister with almost absolute power! Dundas—to use Wilberforce's words—"saw it would not do, and stopped abruptly. 'Really,' said Pitt with a sly severity—and it was almost the only sharp thing I ever heard him say of any friend—"I had not the curiosity to ask what I was to be.'" A second proposal on the part of Addington proved equally abortive. He would resign the Treasury on condition of his being Secretary of State, and no sweeping change being made in the administration.

But Pitt's motto was "all or nothing;" and over and above his positive rejection of Mr. Addington's terms, he added that he would not seriously entertain the question of a return to office at all until he knew what was the King's mind on the subject. He must act, if he acted, under his commands, and he would say and do nothing that might look like forcing a ministry on his royal master. It cannot be denied that this bearing and language were very honourable, and exonerate him from the blame which was thrown on his conduct. But the King was offended both with Addington and Pitt for discussing the question without his sanction, and he reflected most on the latter, who was the least culpable. He even complained that the great statesman wanted to put the

* "Annual Register," 1803, p. 8.

Crown in commission, and "carried his plan of removals so extremely far and so high that it might reach *him*!"

In the summer of 1802 Addington conferred an English barony on a gallant veteran, General Sir Charles Grey. He was the father of a rising orator, who became in time prime minister. Mr. Grey, however, was not over well pleased at his father's elevation, since he foresaw, as its consequence, his own removal to the upper House, and his loss of a commanding position. In the winter following he was offered a seat in the Addington cabinet, but declined it, mainly because the ministry would not adopt any measure of parliamentary reform.* He had a fixed purpose during the whole of his political life; and he could not be induced to swerve from it either by honour or degradation.

On the 22nd of May, 1803, the House of Commons took into consideration a royal message of singular importance. The encroaching policy of France had become intolerable, and the King had requested the support of parliament in resisting it. Two hundred new members were present, and the fame of Pitt's eloquence made them eager to hear him for the first time in his own place on a subject of absorbing interest. Previous speakers were heard with impatience, and there was a loud and almost a universal cry of "Mr. Pitt! Mr. Pitt!" What he really said we shall never know, for the short-hand reporters were excluded. Then was displayed in its perfection what

* Earl Stanhope's "Life of Pitt," vol. iii. p. 267.

Coleridge called "the proud, architectural pile of his sentences." Lord Stanhope tells us that when he sat down "there followed three of the longest, most eager, and most enthusiastic bursts of applause he ever heard in any place on any occasion." Fox, his rival, who disapproved his policy, told the House with his usual generosity, that if Demosthenes had been present, "he must have admired, and might have envied" the orator. His peroration, which occupied half-an-hour, was in a strain of the most powerful declamation, never lowered for an instant. It was rightly construed by society into a negative censure on the ministry of Addington. Fox's speech on the following night lasted from ten till one. It was free from his frequent fault of repetition, and abounded in wit and humour. It contained no bursts of passion, but it charmed the audience more than his usual strain by its calm tone and reasoning pleasantry.

But Addington still achieved the task of government. He spoke very poorly, while Pitt and Fox charmed listening senates and took the hearts of men by storm. He was premier by sufferance, while a flotilla of gun-boats waited at Boulogne and other ports to convey a hundred thousand soldiers of the greatest general in the world to the British coast. But England was prepared for his coming. Besides the regular army, 380,000 volunteers and yeomen were enrolled. Old men rushed to arms with the ardour of youth; and Pitt himself, as Warden of the Cinque Ports, was ready to command 3,000 volunteers.

Poets kindled the enthusiasm of patriots; and the songs of Campbell, Wordsworth, and Walter Scott rang in their ears like martial music. Cobbett's paper on the expected invasion was placed in manuscript before Mr. Addington, printed at his desire, and "read from the pulpit in every parish throughout the kingdom."* Martello towers rose along the south and south-eastern coasts; but what were they compared to the dauntless breasts of half a million of Britons?

"Britannia needs no bulwarks,
No towers along the steep;
Her march is o'er the mountain waves,
Her home is on the deep."†

There, indeed, was her strength. Her fleets were more powerful than those of France. If the destroyer had landed, the King of England, it is well known, would have met him at the head of his army,‡ just as he had resolved to do twenty-four years previously, when our coast was threatened by the fleets of France and Spain.§ It might not have been so easy as Fox fancied to storm the capital, though it must be owned that Colonel Erskine's corps, the Devil's Own, and the Lincoln's Inn Volunteers, called the Devil's Invincibles, were not placed exactly under the highest and best patronage.

In the spring of 1804 Addington had become highly

* Sir H. L. Bulwer's "Cobbett," Parts iii.—vii.

† Campbell, "Ye Mariners of England."

‡ Letter of George III. to the Bishop of Worcester, Nov. 30, 1803.

§ Jesse's "George III.," vol. ii. p. 247.

obnoxious both to Fox and Pitt. Each of those statesmen, Fox in his correspondence and Pitt in his speeches, inveighed against ministers in the bitterest and most sarcastic language. Fox, indeed, was lavish of contemptuous epithets when writing of "the Doctor," as Canning had nicknamed Addington in allusion to his father's profession. He also reflected on Pitt in caustic terms, under the erroneous impression that his rival was only playing a game. It is certain, however, that he behaved with perfect sincerity. He opposed the Addington administration at the last single-handed, but he would not do so in concert with Fox and the Grenvilles. He preferred standing alone, lest his subsequent movements should be hampered. He was nobly imitated by Peel in this independence nearly half a century later.* The crowning act and the last speech of that statesman were in the very spirit of Pitt, whom he took for his model from the first. He subjected the foreign policy of Lord Palmerston to the severest scrutiny; yet, while he censured it, he abstained from joining the ranks of Lord John Russell's bitterest opponents, and suffered no harsh expression, no unkind reflection against the ministers, to escape his lips. Pliancy and independence rather than dogged adherence to party have marked the career of all our great premiers.

By the middle of April Addington saw clearly the necessity of recruiting his forces or of beating a retreat.

* See Speech of Sir Robert Peel, June 28, 1850.

He adopted a middle course, and with the hope of conciliating Pitt, wrote to him requesting that he would state through a friend his opinion respecting the position of affairs, and the best means of framing an efficient ministry. To this foolish request Pitt returned the haughty answer which might have been expected. Neither to Mr. Addington himself, nor for his information, nor to any intermediate friend, would he make any communication on the subject. If the King should command his advice, it would be stated without reserve. Pitt's letter was laid before the King, and Lord Eldon was chosen as the fittest person to negotiate with the ex-minister. It was no easy matter. Pitt on several occasions had slighted his Sovereign, and it is doubtful whether George III. ever knew that the invitation which he had sent him when the court was at Weymouth had never been delivered. He regarded Pitt also as an ally of Fox and the Whigs, as playing into the hands of the Prince of Wales, then Fox's friend and patron, and as having leagued with all these to overthrow the ministry of Addington, which his Majesty delighted to honour because it excluded all the cleverest men of the day.

There were thus three parties opposed to the existing administration—that of Pitt, who was for peace in 1802, and for war in 1803; that of Grenville and Windham, who had opposed the Peace of Amiens; and that of Fox, who had resisted the renewal of hostilities. In this, however, they all agreed, that Addington was unequal to the

task either of concluding a peace or waging a war; and having thus a point of agreement and a common cause, it was natural and proper that Pitt should endeavour to combine their several talents in one compact and imposing ministry. An enemy of giant stature was plotting and arming against our national existence; and little time was left for party politics or internal change. The cabinet which Pitt would form should include the first men of the time. There Grenville and Windham should unite under higher sanction than had hitherto united them; there Fox and Lord Eldon, despite their wide differences, should stand side by side; there Grey and Castlereagh should alike support the throne; while the wit and fancy of Canning and Sheridan would skirmish, like light cavalry, in the van of Pitt's heavier fire.

To most kings such a cabinet would have been highly acceptable, since it was to comprise all parties, and to convert opponents into friends. But George III. was unalterably prejudiced against Fox, and believed his liberal principles to be dangerous alike to religion and to the State. All who stood nearest to royalty feared that if Fox's admission to office were pressed upon him, it would cause a relapse into lunacy. On the 7th of May, Lord Eldon called on Pitt at his residence at No. 14, York Place, and took him in his own coach to Buckingham House. He would not be admitted into the royal presence till he had obtained from the physicians in attendance answers in writing to questions, written down also,

respecting the effect which his conversation might have on the King's health. He found George III., as we have already seen, compliant on all matters excepting Fox's return; and he was so complimentary, that, when Pitt congratulated him on his looking so much better than he did after his illness in 1801, he said: "It is not to be wondered at. I was then on the point of parting with an old friend, and I am now about to regain one."

Pitt was obliged to communicate to Fox the result of his interview with the King. Fox behaved well. He betrayed neither anger nor surprise. He was too old, he said, to care for office; but he should advise his faithful friends to support the administration, and he trusted that Pitt would be able to find places for them. To this the new premier readily assented, and a meeting was to take place between the "mighty chiefs" the next day. Unfortunately it never came off, for a gathering of Fox's friends was held the same evening at Carlton House—then the head-quarters of the Whig army—and at this they decided that, their leader being excluded from the government, they would take no part in it themselves. The King saw "with astonishment" that the Opposition assembled in the palace of his son and heir; but he need not have been apprehensive. It would have been a relief to him if he could have foreseen the perfidy which *he* would have ascribed to the Prince's returning wisdom.

Lord Grenville, afterwards prime minister, who had been Secretary for Foreign Affairs in 1791, stood aloof

with Fox from the new administration; and Pitt was sorely puzzled how to construct a cabinet out of the poor materials left in his hands. Addington meanwhile delivered up the seals of Chancellor of the Exchequer, and refused the peerage for himself, and the pension for his wife, which the King earnestly pressed on his acceptance. It was not long before he was reconciled to Pitt, for whom he had always a strong affection. It was mortifying to him to be passed by his old friend in the parks without a bow; and when he found one day to his surprise that Pitt greeted him, he showed every disposition to meet his successor half way. In the December of 1804 they met at Combe Wood, the seat of Lord Hawkesbury, afterwards Lord Liverpool, which was situated between Pitt's villa on Putney Heath and Addington's residence in Richmond Park. Their interview passed off very pleasantly; and the *redintegratio amorum* was sealed by a conversation of three hours on the first day, and one hour on the second. "I am sure," Pitt said to Wilberforce very soon after, "you are glad to hear that Addington and I are one again. I think they are a little hard upon us in finding fault with our making it up, when we have been friends from our childhood, and our fathers were so before us; while they say nothing to Grenville for uniting with Fox, though they have been fighting all their lives."

William Pitt may well be placed beside those whom Juvenal and Johnson adduced as examples of the vanity of human wishes. His second administration brought

him down with sorrow to the grave. The prestige of his former rule was abated, and his majority was reduced. His burden of daily toil was increased by the incompetency of his fellow-labourers. He had not a single cabinet colleague ever heard in debate, nor indeed any auxiliary at all save Dundas, now Lord Melville,* who was charged with peculation,† censured by the House of Commons, and ejected from the Admiralty. It was a heavy blow for Pitt, whose feelings on such misdemeanours were highly sensitive. His voice faltered in parliament when he spoke of it, his lips quivered, and, calm as he was usually, he almost wept. Indeed, Lord Fitzharris distinctly saw the tears trickling down his cheeks when, in the course of the proceedings against Melville, the Speaker gave the casting vote against the government. Melville was his old friend, and the disgrace he incurred himself and brought on his colleagues tended, in Lord Fitzharris's opinion, to shorten Pitt's life. He was anything but a favourite with the public. Nobody thought well of him, according to Milner; duplicity and artifice were esteemed parts of his character as early as the year 1792.‡

War with Spain followed war with France; and disasters and disgraces trod on each other's heels. The

* Brougham's "Historical Sketches: Marquess Wellesley."

† "Annual Register," 1806, chap. vii.

‡ Dean of Carlisle to W. Wilberforce, April 9, 1792; "Life of Wilberforce," vol. ii. p. 27.

King became blind, or nearly so, in his sixty-seventh year. A cataract had formed over one eye by the end of June, 1805, and a second was forming over the other. But this affliction did not make him more compliant as regards the admission of Fox into the cabinet. On the 17th of September the premier made another effort to bend the royal purpose in this matter, but without success. Addington had in January been created Lord Sidmouth, and sworn in as President of the Privy Council; but he soon forgot his altered position, and took upon himself to interfere in the administration in a manner unsuited to Pitt's supremacy and haughty disposition. He almost quarrelled with the prime minister again; and because he could not have his own way in the appointment of Melville's successor as First Lord of the Admiralty, he resigned, with several of his friends.

Nothing could be more undignified than the mode of his retirement. He forced his conversation on the King for more than an hour. The Prince of Wales called him (with an emphatic past participle) "that insignificant puppy;" and what George III. called him, when "plagued to death" with his prosiness, is only to be expressed by asterisks. It was necessary to fill up the vacant places, and the opportunity of restoring Fox to his natural eminence seemed admirable. But the blind old King was determined, he said, to have nothing more to do with Fox or Grenville: he could not trust them, and they could have no confidence in him. In the preceding May they

had brought forward anew their measure for the relief of Irish Catholics. But their motion was thrown out in the Commons by a majority of 336 against 124. Pitt allowed that he was still in favour of Catholic Emancipation, but stated that, so long as the King and popular feeling were opposed to it, he should continue to resist it, and to deprecate the question being agitated. What George III. felt on the subject is too evident from the following note written by him to Pitt from Kew, on the 15th of May, 1805:—

“The King is most extremely rejoiced at the great majority with which Mr. Fox’s motion for a committee on the Catholic petition has been rejected, and he trusts that such decided majorities in both Houses of Parliament so strongly show the sense of the kingdom on this most essential question—which his majesty is convinced, if the opinions of the people without doors could be known, would prove a still larger majority on this occasion—that he trusts it will never be brought forward again.

“G. R.” *24.5.16*

The best defence which can be set up for George III. in his constant opposition to liberal measures is this—that the people were almost always on his side. Yet the defence, after all, would be specious; for if the representation of minorities ever be carried into effect, it should be in the case of a sovereign. He, above all men, should

represent the friendless, and advocate the cause of the oppressed. He should aim at justice rather than popularity, and induce by every possible argument the majority of his subjects to console and conciliate suffering minorities.

Pitt's war policy during his second tenure of power was as fruitless as during his first. The coalition which he formed against Napoleon, far from humbling his pride and checking his ravages, was the means of extending his empire and his fame. The vows which the Czar of Russia and the King of Prussia made over the tomb of Frederick the Great, and which were expected to work such momentous results, proved as inept as Pitt's scheme for the liberation of the prostrate States of Germany. Though leagued with Austria, Sweden, and Great Britain, they were unable to cope with the new modes of French warfare, the fiery battalions, and the transcendent genius of the little Corsican. He masked his designs with consummate skill; broke up the camp he had formed for the invasion of England; advanced by rapid marches to the borders of Germany; achieved in a week's campaign the total humiliation of the Prussian monarchy;* defeated General Mack at the head of a large Austrian army at Ulm; and finally, by the victory of Austerlitz, stretched the continent of Europe bleeding and suppliant at his feet.

To the rapid course of these terrible disasters Pitt was

* Bourrienne, "*Mémoires*," chap. 29.

fatally sensitive. Sickness and misery became daily more clearly depicted in his face. When the news of Mack's defeat arrived, he refused to believe it; but on the 3rd of November, having received a Dutch paper in which the capitulation of Ulm was inserted, he and Lord Mulgrave, not being able to read Dutch, carried it to Lord Malmesbury in Spring Gardens. He translated it for them, and "observed," as he says in his "Diaries," "but too clearly the effect it had on Pitt." Four days later came the joyful tidings of the victory of Trafalgar;* and the people of London, excited by the event, made the most of their triumph on the sea because there was so little to boast of by land. Taking the horses out of the premier's carriage, they drew it up Cheapside and King Street; but he heard their shouts and the pealing of the church-bells with conflicting emotions. He lay awake by night, pondering the probable consequences of the defeat at Ulm.

Early in December he repaired to Bath, in hopes that the waters would refresh him for the coming session. Here he was visited with his father's malady, the gout, and had not the consolation of finding it a cure for other complaints. There, too, Canning came with the report of Bonaparte's victory at Austerlitz,† and this news was too much for Pitt's fast-drooping strength. The coalition was dissolved, and what hope was left for the liberty of nations? He called for a map of the seat of war, and desired to be left alone. A look of misery, which Wil-

* Won Oct. 21, 1805.

† Won Dec. 2, 1805.

berforce called his "Austerlitz look," came over his face, and never left it till every trace of human passion was melted down in death's "rapture of repose." Every day he became more emaciated, and his friends could hardly recognise him. By slow journeys he returned from Bath to his villa on Putney Heath. Sir Walter Farquhar, his physician, accompanied him; and he arrived on the 11th of January, 1806. His niece, Lady Hester Stanhope, received him, not without the sad conviction that his days were numbered. Austerlitz had struck at his heart. He passed a map of Europe on the way to his bedchamber, and said, turning to Lady Hester, "Roll up that map; it will not be wanted these ten years." Though he rallied a little, he felt that he should not recover, and he complained of that "general giving way," which is the surest forerunner of dissolution.

Lord Wellesley, who had just concluded his brilliant career as Governor in India, visited the dying man, and was charmed alike by his kindness and conversation. Of Wellesley's brother Arthur, afterwards Duke of Wellington, Pitt said, "I never met any military officer with whom it was so satisfactory to converse. He states every difficulty before he undertakes any service; but none after he has undertaken it." Before Wellesley left the room, Pitt had fainted with the exertion and excitement of talking on congenial topics. His political friends were now forbidden to speak with him, and the heart of the

patriot premier had time to break. He might, indeed, have cast the burden of his country's affairs on the great Disposer and Ruler of nations. He might have hoped that out of England a leader would arise capable of confronting the hero of Austerlitz, of checking his ravages, routing his hosts, and chaining him at last to a rock in the Atlantic. But he could not foresee that the very Arthur of whom he had been speaking was destined to do more than repair his country's losses, to crush for ever the power of the enemy of nationalities, and to reconstruct Europe. He might have trusted that marvellous restoration would follow such fierce destruction. But hope was drowning, and confidence was wrecked in a sea of trouble.

It was a strange sight. The First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer was, by the concurrent testimony of his dearest friends, dying of a broken heart. "Pitt was killed by the enemy," Wilberforce wrote, "as truly as Nelson." It was a strange sight in several ways. The son of Chatham, who, with genius and fame scarcely less than his father's, had governed England during nineteen years, was struggling for existence in a hired villa by the roadside. The beautiful, but heavily mortgaged, residence of Holwood in Kent, which he had once owned, where he pruned and dug with his own hands among the charms of natural scenery, had been sold to pay his debts five years before; and, as he lay on his couch of pain, he could see the palace-like lodge where Addington, now Lord Sidmouth, was living, and was

yet to live nearly forty years, in the midst of dignities and splendour. There was little, perhaps, in the contrast to sadden Pitt's heart, for the honours which he had earned were of a far more durable kind than those which had descended on Sidmouth. But when the spirits are already sinking, trifles however light in themselves, add to the inward burden and make it intolerable. When Rose visited him on the 19th of January, he found him in tears, while his features betrayed the most poignant grief.

When parliament re-assembled, his place was vacant, and his political foes were too generous to make any attack on him at such a moment. Fox evinced much feeling when he alluded to his alarming illness; and the campaign which the Opposition had intended to open was postponed. The 23rd came, and the Bishop of Lincoln, apprising Pitt of his danger, pressed him to prepare for death by receiving the sacrament. But Pitt had not strength equal to the service, and accepted only the Bishop's invitation to prayer.* He spoke of himself with unfeigned humility; and this Dr. Tomline assured him was the best guarantee for the success of prayer. He feared, he said, that he had neglected it too much to allow him to hope that it would now be very efficacious; but he added, clasping his hands with much fervour, "I throw myself entirely upon the mercy of God, through the merits of Christ." The words quoted, however, are not in Pitt's style; and though one

* Gifford's "Life of Pitt," vol. vi. pp. 806, 807.

would be sorry to doubt the Bishop of Lincoln as an informant, there appears to be great reason to suspect that they never were uttered.

The discrepancy between the several accounts of Pitt's last moments are very considerable: and it is evident that reporters put into his mouth language which they wished him to breathe, or which they thought likely to come from him. He had always conformed to customary religious observances, but had never professed any special conviction of the truth of Revelation.* Wilberforce, who knew him so well, attached no credence to the stories that were told of his pious end. His nephew, the Hon. J. H. Stanhope, has left an interesting account of his closing hours—the affectionate farewell which he took of Lady Hester; “his angelic mildness” to his physician and all who attended his bedside; his incoherent thoughts on the affairs of his country; and the love and concern which he expressed for England with his last breath: but when we compare this narrative with other testimonies, and make all the needful deductions, the residuum presents little that is remarkable, and less that is satisfactory.† The dazzling brightness which had encircled his forehead in the senate faded away when he entered the valley of the shades of death.

“It is a singular and melancholy circumstance,” says

* Goldwin Smith's “Lectures on Pitt,” pp. 53, 68, 70; “Life of Wilberforce,” vol. i. pp. 29, 95; vol. ii. pp. 212, 220.

† Jesse's “Memoirs of George III.,” vol. iii. p. 468, note; *Westminster Review*, xxii. 33, note.

Lord Brougham, "resembling the stories told of William the Conqueror's deserted state at his decease, that some one in the neighbourhood having sent a messenger to inquire into Mr. Pitt's state, he found the wicket open, then the door of the house, and nobody answering the bell, he walked through the rooms till he reached the bed on which the minister's body lay lifeless, the sole tenant of the mansion, of which the doors, a few hours before, were darkened by crowds of suitors alike obsequious and importunate—the vultures whose instinct haunts the carcases only of living ministers." *

The 23rd of January, on which Pitt's early career ended, was, as I have said, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the day when he took his seat in parliament. Centuries will elapse before his labours in that quarter of a century are forgotten. His remains were worthy of the highest honour, and the House of Commons showed no disposition to withhold it. A public funeral at the cost of the nation was voted, and £40,000 for the payment of his debts. The motion for this outlay was carried by a majority of 288 to 89 ; and if Fox was one of those who opposed it, he did so with the utmost delicacy and good feeling. St. Edward the Confessor died within the walls of the Painted Chamber at Westminster ; the remains of Chatham rested there on their way to the adjoining abbey ; and there also the body of William Pitt lay in state on the 20th and 21st of February, 1806.

* Lord Brougham's "Historical Sketches."

It would be long to tell the names of those princes of the blood, peers, bishops, and commoners, who followed him to the tomb with unfeigned grief. Six persons who had been, or were to be, prime ministers, were among the number,—Lords Sidmouth, Grenville, and Liverpool, Spencer Perceval, Canning, and Sir Arthur Wellesley. No one in the mournful train—perhaps not even Wellington excepted—will be remembered longer by posterity than William Wilberforce. He supported the banner of the crest of Pitt; and to his eye the face of the father seemed to be looking down in fearful concern on the grave that was opened for the son. Well might Lord Wellesley, who also was present, ask: “What grave contains such a father and such a son? What sepulchre embosoms the remains of so much excellence and glory?” The disinterested patriotism of the elder had certainly descended to the younger, and the herald could not be accused of flattery when he pronounced over him this eulogium: “*Non sibi sed patriæ vixit.*”

Of Pitt’s public character little more need be said. He was thoroughly grand and English in his designs; and by his majestic composure and power of debate he gave to every measure he adopted a momentum difficult to resist. If his will had not been controlled by that of parliament and of the Sovereign, he might have pursued a consistent and a grander course. He might have reformed the representation as others have done after him, and as he proposed to do on three several occasions. He might have

abolished the Test Act, and have taken Catholic members of parliament by the hand, and conducted them to their seats in the legislature. He might have completed the work of negro emancipation; he might have developed the views of Sir Robert Walpole on Free Trade more fully, and have anticipated the anti-Protectionist measures of Sir Robert Peel. All this it was in his heart to do; but in social advance, as in the processes of nature, many seeds are lost, many buds are nipped. Sunny days predict summer long before the fruit-season arrives; and it often happens that a statesman who has only made vigorous efforts in a good direction has amply accomplished the purpose of his being.

If the nation still groans under the debt with which he saddled it, we ought to remember that the burden of debt is light compared with those evils which his policy as regards France ultimately averted. It were better to incur debts irredeemable to the end of time than to allow the country's honour to be stained, her power to be diminished, and her soil to be profaned by a monster of ambition. The feelings which Pitt entertained towards France before the war were noble and generous beyond those of his contemporaries and rivals. It was in the teeth of Charles James Fox that he carried a commercial treaty with France. It was in advance of his father Chatham's ideas, and in the spirit of Cobden himself, that he repudiated the notion that France and England must be enemies for ever. He regarded Free Trade as both

cause and effect of international prosperity and peace. He strove to establish it between England and Ireland, and thus to pave the way for the Union. Fox and his liberal followers resisted him. Burke, the advocate of Economic Reform, fought for Protection. Eighty thousand manufacturers in Lancashire petitioned against Free Trade,* while Pitt, the stay of monarchy, Pitt, the Tory and the aristocrat, stood forward boldly as its champion.

If he avowed himself a protectionist in the article of corn, he had this excuse, that war was imminent, and that the nation, therefore, ought to be ready to provision itself. Nor was the mining and manufacturing population in his day buying corn, as it did subsequently, at starvation prices. He supported the reform of the Libel Law in a liberal direction; and by placing Lord Eldon on the Woolsack, he indirectly promoted reform in that department, and the mitigation of ferocious' statutes.† He was never so eloquent as when he pleaded for the freedom of slaves; and his exertions in their behalf were the more laudable, because, as a minister of State, he was more responsible than mere reformers like Wilberforce and Clarkson. It was not his fault that the Lords, in their hereditary wisdom, threw out the bill for the partial abolition of the Slave Trade, which he carried through the House of Commons in 1799.

His spirit was truly tolerant. Whether it was the

* Goldwin Smith's "Lectures on Pitt," p. 63.

† *Ibid.*, p. 66.

toleration of a Christian or a sceptic we cannot tell, but he inclined personally to the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, though as minister he voted against it. Ministerial tactics often cloak real convictions, as language was invented for the concealment of thought. If he had insisted on Catholic Emancipation, which he sincerely approved, he might perhaps have carried it, and have fulfilled the conditions by which the assent of the Roman Catholics of Ireland to the repeal of the Union was obtained. But with a king and a people who would both have been driven to phrensy by Catholic Emancipation and Catholic endowments, who can wonder that the spirit even of the son of Chatham quailed before the terrific responsibility, that he forfeited the pledge he had given to the Irish, and bequeathed to posterity the task of fulfilling such heavy obligations? In Ireland he did what he could, which was little indeed, to reform the Church. He besought the clergy to propose an accommodation themselves in the matter of tithes, but his entreaties had no more weight with them than his arguments.

To the surprise and dismay of his party, Pitt voted for Fox's motion when the latter opened the charges against Warren Hastings. It was a proof of a candid and impartial mind; it was generously taking the part of oppressed humanity; it was a protest against the fashionable doctrine that success justified rapacious cruelty.

In giving a parliament of its own to each of the

Canadas, Pitt seized the exact idea of what a great colonial dependency should be. He granted it the making of its own laws, and by admitting the people of French Canada to political rights, he established a precedent for Roman Catholic Emancipation. When Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Shelburne cabinet, Pitt gladly took part in the negotiations for peace with America. He had fully imbibed his father's feelings towards the colonists, and he desired to treat with them on commercial questions as far as possible as if they were Englishmen. Nothing but the fierce excesses of the French democrats drove him into reaction. He was provoked to it no less than Burke, who, as an Indian and economical reformer, had given an impetus to the popular movement. He stood aloof from the coalition of Pilnitz, and sympathised with the French revolutionists at the outset, as he had, to a certain extent, with those of America. Freedom ran in his veins, for he was Chatham's son. He struggled for it even when he seemed to be opposing it. He propped up little despotisms to stave off a great one. He dreaded the spread of revolutionary principles at home, if France and England continued to be at peace. War appeared to him the best outlet for fierce passions, and the safeguard of the Constitution. Minor considerations were swallowed up in the paramount duty of saving England from being invaded or unsettled.

In declining to be decorated with the Order of the Garter, Pitt, like Peel after him, under King William IV.,

showed a laudable superiority to such distinctions. He wished only that it might be given to his brother, the Earl of Chatham. He was gratified by the distinction offered to him, but that was enough. He was, with the exception of Sir Robert Walpole, the only untitled commoner who had been gartered since Robert Dudley and Sir Christopher Hatton knelt before Queen Elizabeth.* When the wardenship of the Cinque Ports became vacant by the death of Lord Guilford (North), the King took care to bestow the valuable gift on Pitt in a manner which precluded all refusal.† Their strong leaning towards each other is not to be wondered at, when so many persons shared the opinion of Sir George Rose, that "it was the co-operation of such a king and such a minister as Mr. Pitt that, under God, saved us from the French Revolution."‡

It cannot be denied that during the Pitt administration, and partially under the viceroyalty of Lord Camden, the cruelties practised by the Orange party in Ireland were of the most atrocious kind. But Lord Cornwallis was sent by Pitt to replace the miserable Camden; and if the sufferings of Irish Catholics continued to be severe even under the more lenient rule of the former nobleman, the charge brought against the premier on this score must be merged in the general one which affects the whole

* King to Mr. Pitt, Dec. 12th, 13th, and 14th, 1790; Jesse, vol. iii. p. 140.

† King to Mr. Pitt and to Mr. Dundas, August 6, 1792.

‡ Sir G. Rose to J. W. Croker, Feb. 5, 1845.

of the dominant race in Ireland at that time, whether residing in the country or representing the Orange interests in the Houses of Parliament. The unhappy natives were goaded into disaffection, and then persecuted for a real or supposed attachment to the principles of the French Revolution.

But it was as Minister of War that Pitt most signally failed. Twice he entrusted the command of the British army to the feeble hands of the Duke of York. Disaster followed almost all his military combinations. "His forces were never found on a decisive field. Like a bad chess-player, he ran over the board, taking pawns, while the adversary was checking his king. He carried his victorious arms from Tobago to St. Domingo, from St. Domingo to St. Lucia, from St. Lucia to Guadaloupe. This was the traditional mode of making war on France; and he did not see how different was the France on which he had now to make war."*

There is one stain on Pitt's memory which posterity, however clement, cannot wash out. His honour was involved in completing the Union with Ireland by Catholic Emancipation. This he not only failed to do, but out of regard to his Sovereign he promised in writing that he would never again moot the question, and that he would oppose it to the day of his death. This was carrying loyalty rather too far. It prevailed against justice. It cancelled personal honour. An engagement is sacred;

* Goldwin Smith, "Lectures on Pitt," p. 100.

and if Pitt had observed his, he would have stood higher in the esteem of all thinking men, without driving George III. into lunacy or to Hanover. Considering all the circumstances, we cannot be surprised at his setting it aside, but we regret that he did not hold to it firmly. Faith in political leaders would then have been more easy, and public virtue less a sham.

Whatever opinion may be formed of Pitt's conduct in commencing the war with France, there can be no doubt that the struggle against Bonaparte was one of vital necessity. It was the cause of national independence against the modern Attila—the savage Corsican bandit, who, after desolating the nations that resisted him, made the laws and social ideas which he introduced the instrument of their more complete subjection. Pitt was in reality conquering Napoleon at the very time that Austerlitz was killing him. Nor let it be supposed that, in combating the Revolution and the military despotism in which it issued, Pitt was unmindful of the Papacy as the great antagonist of revolution in all ages, and the mainstay of society. Negotiations passed between him and the Papal court in 1794, which, though they had not an official character, and were conducted through the agency of French emigrants, were not on that account less sincere and important as exhibiting the views of the premier and the Pope.

The Bishop of Arras, in a letter to Cardinal de Bernis, in May, 1794, gives a detailed account of his interviews

with Pitt on the subject of the Holy See. The minister was convinced that the true antidote to the revolutionary idea was that of religion. The English Ambassadors at all the courts were directed to call attention to the attitude and energy of the Pope, and to press upon all the sovereigns the importance of recognising him as the supreme head and visible bond of union in the league against the Revolution. It was Pitt's earnest desire that Pius VI. should extend to the rest of Europe the measures which he had taken in the prospect of an invasion of the pontifical territory. All the nations in arms were to be thrown up as a rampart to check the revolutionary torrent. Prussia and Russia were to be influenced by England; Italy, Spain, Austria, and a part of Germany were to be exhorted by the Pope. La Vendée was to be stirred into revolt. The moment was opportune. Catholicism in France had been trampled down. "The Pope's marriage" and endless similar profanities were acted in the Parisian theatres. A lever was wanted by which to raise conservative spirits from dejection. Courts and cabinets were divided by conflicting interests; Rome only could speak with an impartial voice. Her duty no less than her affections should impel her to take the lead. A Papal bull should proclaim a holy war. Legates should be sent expressly on this mission to the different courts. A common danger would efface distinctions of creed; and a legate would be received in London with as much respect as at Vienna or

at Madrid. An English fleet should protect the Italian coast, and convey an ambassador from the King of England to negotiate with the Holy See.

Such was Pitt's design. *Monsieur* and the Count d'Artois approved it, of course ; but, what was more to the purpose, Lord Moira, Windham, and Burke approved it likewise.*

The Bishop of Arras, in reporting it to Cardinal de Bernis, endorsed it with his respectful recommendation, more especially as Pitt had intimated his intention of offering the Pope and the Sacred College a retreat on board English men-of-war, in case of their being compelled to fly before an invasion of the patrimony of St. Peter. They should be transported, he said, to Sicily, Madeira, or the Balearic Islands, and there be covered from attack by a British squadron.

The answer to these friendly proposals was such as might have been expected. It was full of courtesy and gratitude to Mr. Pitt. It accepted on the part of his Holiness the offer of an asylum protected by the British flag in case of need ; but declared also that nothing but force would drive the Holy Father from the tomb of the Apostles ; that he was ready to await with the crucifix in his hand the coming of the Revolution to the gates of Rome. But, as regards a European war, the Pope would take no other step beyond that of defending his own

* Crétineau-Joly. "L'Église Romaine en face de la Révolution," tome i. pp. 190—3.

territory. The days were past in which the Holy See could punish with temporal arms the excesses of people or of kings. The sovereigns of Europe were too much divided in their counsels and interests for the Pope to interfere with advantage in the manner suggested by Mr. Pitt. He, above all men, would be able to comprehend how the dignity of the Holy See would be compromised, and fearful reprisals provoked, if the head of the Church were to go out of his province and to attempt to marshal a crusade.*

Amid all the bitter and heart-breaking disappointments which Pitt had to endure, he must certainly have derived some consolation from reflecting on the honourable proposals he had made to the head of the Catholic Church, and on the efforts for the relief of Irish Catholics by which they were followed.

Less is recorded of Pitt's private habits than might have been expected in so great a man. His carelessness in the management of his large official income, which left him, though a bachelor without very expensive tastes, deeply in debt at his death, is unfortunately too well known. Lord Stanhope, Macaulay, and Gifford have gathered up almost all that is known respecting him, and have drawn largely for their information on diaries and correspondence, such as those of Wilberforce, Rose, Lord Malmesbury, and Lord Colchester. Had he been more

* Letter of Cardinal de Bernis, June 10, 1794.

genial, there would be a larger stock of anecdotes illustrating his personal tastes. But his manners were chilly; and his figure, tall and stately, but not graceful, seemed to repel too near an approach. He could be polite, and even gracious, but he did not abound in smiles. He inspired respect rather than love; and it is remarkable that one so gifted with the power of endurance should have sunk at last under "the blows of circumstance." When a discussion arose one day in his presence on the quality most needed in a prime minister, one said eloquence, another knowledge, and a third labour; but Pitt exclaimed "No; patience." The harder lines in his character are softened by the kindness of heart evinced in his letters to his mother, and in the concern he took in the trifles which affected her happiness.

After his decease Mr. Brougham assailed his memory with fierce invectives in a speech at Liverpool.* He was "immortal," he said, "in the miseries of his devoted country; immortal in the wounds of her bleeding liberties; immortal in the cruel wars which sprung from his cold, miscalculating ambition." But that ardent, and then youthful reformer, would now probably in extreme old age† regard the picture he drew of Pitt's infamy as too highly coloured, and would, if he retouched it, tone it down to that more venerable and faithful portrait in which friends and foes alike now concur in finding the

* In reply to Canning.

† Written before Lord Brougham's decease.

real likeness. "Like the Arthur of romance, William Pitt was a blameless gentleman."* "In all my researches in ancient and modern times," wrote Gibbon, "I have nowhere met with his parallel—who at so early a period of life discharged so important a trust with so much credit to himself and with so much advantage to his country."

* "*Nugæ Criticæ*," by Shirley, p. 386.

**GRENVILLE, PORTLAND, AND
PERCEVAL.**

“ Where are the Grenvilles ? Turn’d as usual. Where
My friends the Whigs ? Exactly where they were.
Nought’s permanent among the human race,
Except the Whigs *not* getting into place.”

LORD BYRON.

“ In armed neutrality the Grenvilles stand,
And name the terms on which they’ll save the land.
All men are brethren, bound to help each other—
Gods ! how each Grenville helped his Grenville brother.”

LORD LYTTON.

“ The solemn senate no asylum yields,
Nor Perceval from sanguine fury shields ;
There, unprotected by the sacred walls,
Assassination’s virtuous victim falls.”

DIBDIN.

XII.

GRENVILLE, PORTLAND, AND PERCEVAL.

WHEN Fox died, the brightest talent in that ministry which was nicknamed "All the Talents" faded away.* Erskine was left as Lord Chancellor; Lord Sidmouth, the quondam Addington, became President of the Council; Lord Holland was Privy Seal; Windham was Secretary for War and the Colonies; Earl Grey, then Lord Howick, stepped into Fox's place as Foreign Secretary; and Lord Grenville, a man of mixed politics, continued to be first Lord of the Treasury. He was then in his forty-seventh year, having been born in the same year as William Pitt (1759).† He was the third son of that George Grenville whose ministry had been so obnoxious to George III., and who made himself notorious as the author of the Stamp Act, which drove America into revolt. He had been twenty-four years engaged in parliamentary warfare, had shared in Pitt's ministry of 1783, had been appointed Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in 1791, had about the same time been raised to the

* See Sir H. L. Bulwer's "Canning," Parts i.—xii.

† October 25, 1759.

peerage, and had concurred with his leader in raising every obstacle, at home and abroad, to the spread of revolutionary principles. To his exertions in great part was owing the Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland; and, like Pitt in his earlier years, and Fox to the end of his days, he advocated the admission of Catholics to political privileges.

In 1804, when the strength of Pitt was invoked to supersede the weakness of Addington, an important place in the cabinet was designed for Grenville; but on the King's absolute refusal to enter Fox on the list of ministers, Grenville took part with the excluded Whig chief, and deserted his old friend and colleague Pitt. Many severe reflections were cast on him for this step, especially by Lord Malmesbury. "It superseded," he said, "early and intimate connections, both political and of friendship, obligations without end received, and broke up a uniformity of conduct which had begun with Lord Grenville's public existence." His desertion of his friend and kinsman (for they were cousins) was the more marked, because in the previous year Pitt had, with faithfulness resembling that of Chatham to Lord Temple,* declined the premiership, of which he was all but certain, rather than separate from Grenville. The breach caused by this preference for Fox was healed only by death. When Pitt was sinking into the tomb, his cousin depre-

* "Parliamentary History," vol. xv. p. 1363, and Jesse's "George III.," vol. i. pp. 273-4.

cated with becoming feeling any attack being made on his measures; and when the great leader of the Tories had breathed his last, the announcement made Grenville break into "an agony of tears." It is not improbable that the Catholic question severed him from Pitt; and if so, we shall look leniently on what might otherwise appear a sin against the law of friendship. On the grave subject of Catholic Emancipation, Pitt and Fox, as we have seen, were agreed at heart; but Pitt was content to hold in abeyance what Fox insisted on to the end. Lord Brougham has ably described Lord Grenville's character, and presented it in the most favourable colours.* Every member of his cabinet, I may observe, *en passant*, was a lord or a lord's son except Mr. Windham, as in the cabinet of the Duke of Portland, which succeeded it, every member was a lord or a lord's son except Mr. Canning.† It was thus also with the Pitt administration in 1783, when every minister was a peer except the premier, and he was an earl's son.‡

The state of Ireland occupied every year a larger share of public attention. A reference to the pages of the "Annual Register" will prove that the number of pamphlets that appeared concerning it was prodigious, and that it was in every respect "a question of the day." It was difficult to go on treating that country generation after

* "Historical Sketches," vol. ii., first series.

† See Sir H. L. Bulwer's "Canning," Parts i.—xiii.

‡ Goldwin Smith's "Pitt."

generation as a haunt of conquered savages. The policy of King James and Cromwell—to “plant Ireland with Puritans and root out Papists, and secure it”—had been tried during two centuries, and had utterly failed. Every attempt to eradicate Catholicism had rooted it deeper in the soil. Every rebellion crushed was disaffection spread wider; and a fresh brood of Fitzgeralds and Emmets sprang from the grave of every patriot hanged or slain. The Act of Union was not an act of pacification. The seat of government was transferred to the capital of the aliens and oppressors; the land was hopelessly in the hands of Protestant and Saxon landlords; the tenants were cottiers, liable at any moment to be evicted, without the means of improving their farms, or any security for the cost of improvements if they managed to make them. The dominant Church, which they were compelled to support, was a hideous mockery—a fold in many parishes without a flock, and a pastor often without a single sheep. The British army, which should have been their defence and boast, was the means of their constant subjection; yet into this army the Irish peasantry were drafted, and fought side by side with English soldiers in every quarter of the globe, with courage and endurance which called forth the admiration of all in command.

One of the puny and pitiable concessions made to Irish Catholics in 1793 was that of allowing them to rise in the army to the rank of colonel, provided they were serving in Ireland. If they served in England

or Scotland, no prodigies of valour, no fall of superior officers, no interest, no purchase-money, could raise them to the command of a regiment. Lord Sidmouth and Chancellor Erskine were opposed to the Catholic Emancipation; yet even they, in the abundance of their generosity, were willing to extend the privilege conceded to Catholic officers serving in Ireland to majors and captains on duty in England and Scotland also. The King was alarmed at the proposal, and wrote in the first instance to Lord Spencer, declaring that he would never consent to it. It would remove a restriction on Roman Catholics, and it was therefore only part of a plan to which he was unalterably averse. Two days later, however, he resolved not to thwart his ministers for such a trifle; and it was not till two or three weeks had passed over that he learned from Lord Sidmouth that he had been deceived by the liberal members of the cabinet, and that they actually intended to put Catholics and Dissenters on exactly the same footing as members of the Established Church in the army, exacting from them simply an oath of allegiance.

The bill was prepared, and had, in fact, been submitted to the King, who, in consequence of his blindness, had allowed it to pass through his hands without scrutiny. If he had been deceived, it was not through his ministers' fault or intention.* He was greatly excited by Lord Sidmouth's announcement, and became still more indignant when the bill, fathered upon him, was introduced into

* Mr. Grey's "*Life of Earl Grey*," pp. 150, 151.

parliament by Lord Howick,* vehemently opposed by Mr. Perceval, and read for the first time. But he kept his own counsel, and resolved to rid himself of men whom he regarded as dangerous and false. He informed his ministers that the bill in question would never receive his signature, that it must be withdrawn, and that he would be satisfied with nothing less than a positive assurance from them, which should relieve him from all future apprehension. This they declined to give; and the King, having ascertained that their answer was a final one, said, "Then I must look about me."

People in general thought it was not very astute in "All the Talents" thus to commit political suicide. Sheridan especially, who, by their abandonment of office, lost his lucrative Treasurership of the Navy, was vexed at their conduct. They had been struggling for office thirty years, and had enjoyed it only one; they had collected bricks and built a wall, for the express purpose of knocking out their brains against it. The epitaph which Canning wrote in the *Anti-Jacobin* on the Grenville administration was not very complimentary; the stanzas which follow being the more temperate part of it:—

"Here lies in the tomb that we hollowed for Pitt,
Consistence of Grenville, of Temple the wit;
Of Sidmouth the firmness, the temper of Grey,
And Treasurer Sheridan's promise to pay.

* Jesse's "George III.," vol. iii, p. 503.

“ Here Petty’s* finance, from the evils to come,
 With Fitzpatrick’s sobriety creeps to the tomb ;
 And Chancellor Ego,† now left in the lurch,
 Neither dines with the Jordan,‡ nor whines for the Church.”

The result of the King’s “looking about him” was that he found the Duke of Portland, and fixed on him as Lord Grenville’s successor. The duke, indeed, had already volunteered his services in this emergency. Many of the King’s friends, no less than his enemies, thought the step he had taken a frantic one ; but long experience had made him a good judge of the strength of parties, and his decision had the effect of excluding the Whigs from power during three-and-twenty years. He had but to raise the “No-Popery” cry, and he immediately evicted an obnoxious cabinet. A few words only on that subject sufficed to muzzle Pitt or Fox, Grenville, Castlereagh, or Canning.

The Duke of Portland was a great-grandson of that William Bentinck, page, friend, and ambassador of William of Orange, whom that prince created first Duke of Portland. He was now sixty-nine years of age, and had passed the greater part of his long life in the field of politics. He had been in the Opposition ; he filled high offices of trust ; he formed the link between Fox and Lord North in the Coalition Ministry ; had returned into Opposition within a year of his being made First Lord of the Treasury ; allied himself to Pitt in 1793 ; was chosen

* Afterwards Marquis of Lansdowne.

† Lord Erskine.

‡ Mrs. Jordan.

Chancellor of the University of Oxford; made Secretary of State, and Lord-Lieutenant of the county of Nottingham. It was not without great hesitation that he severed himself from Fox, to whom he was personally attached. He even reprobated Lord Loughborough for accepting the Great Seal at Pitt's hands, yet, not long after, he condescended to be made Secretary of State by him, and to be adorned with the Order of the Garter.*

In 1801, when Pitt made way for Addington, and resigned his power through a certain amount of zeal for the liberty of Catholics, the Duke of Portland was made President of the Council; but he had voluntarily quitted this post in 1805, and now resumed his place in the cabinet, when his career was fast drawing to its close. He was an indolent man; scarcely ever appeared in parliament; and "possessed in an eminent degree the talent of dead silence."† It was well understood that the administration he formed would be based on purely Protestant principles. In choosing him for his instrument, the King was, unfortunately, amply supported by public opinion. The highest degree of intolerance prevailed. If Lord George Gordon had been still alive, he would, perhaps, have entered the cabinet, instead of being committed to Newgate. So, at least, said Henry Erskine.

The Duke of Cumberland warmly applauded his father's

* Jesse's "George III.," vol. iii. p. 190.

† Bell's "Life of Canning," p. 227.

resolute conduct; and it is well known that the bitterness of his hostility to Catholics remained with him on the throne of Hanover, and to his latest day. The King lost Addington, or rather Lord Sidmouth, by the new arrangement; but in his place he welcomed Lord Eldon to his council-board. When he delivered the Great Seal to him in the royal closet, on the 1st of April, 1807, he said, "I wish and hope you may keep it till I die;" and he added, that the contest with his late ministers had been a struggle for his throne: he was resolved to be the Protestant King of a Protestant country, or no King at all. The boldness with which he avowed his intolerant policy was taken by his people as a great mark of piety and wisdom; while the bitterness of his sufferings—blindness, frequent insanity, and the unbridled excesses of his children—procured for him the compassion and sympathy of all who had hearts to feel.

In January, 1809, he was distressed by the news from Spain. The gallant Sir John Moore had fallen at Corunna, and the British army was in retreat. The last hope of the deliverance of the Peninsula seemed extinct, and not one native army worthy of the name kept the field.* "Perceval and Castlereagh," wrote Lord Bulkeley, "take the thing very coolly; Mulgrave and Westmoreland bawl out faction; Camden shakes his head, like Lord Burleigh in the "Critic;" Canning is like a madman, they say; Bathurst and Chatham are full of *sang froid*, and so is

* Gleig's "Life of Wellington," p. 110.

Eldon ; Liverpool, they say, looks sad, wretched, and thoughtful ; but at head-quarters" (he alludes to the King) "there is true courage and firmness, supported by a mind conscious of virtue, patriotism, and rectitude."

His Majesty and the Duke of Portland, in their narrow policy, found a strenuous colleague in Mr. Perceval. He, like Pitt and Fox, was the second son of a peer. His father, Lord Egmont, had caused him to study at the bar ; but he had not been able to distinguish himself much in his profession.* He had supported the ministry of Addington, however, with ability, and pleased the King by the skill and energy with which he defended prejudices that ought to have been buried in the grave of the eighteenth century. In 1807 he was made Chancellor of the Exchequer, and as such he was the ministerial leader in the House of Commons. He has well been styled "a third-rate professional politician, scarcely fit to carry Lord Chatham's crutch."†

To this man George III. entrusted the reins of government when they were dropped by the old and feeble hand of the Duke of Portland. That nobleman retired from office in September, 1809, and died on the 30th of the following month. He had long been suffering intense pain, and had borne the fatigue of office solely by the constant use of anodynes. He had latterly been unable

* "Le Cabinet Anglais de 1806 à 1830," *Revue Des Deux Mondes*, tome lx. ; "Life of Perceval," by C. V. Williams, pp. 8, 10.

† *All the Year Round*, December, 1866.

to pay attention to any business, or even to listen to conversation or a book. If his excruciating pain left him for a moment, he fell asleep. The untoward aspect of public affairs weighed heavily on his mind, as they had on Pitt's; and the disgrace incurred by the Duke of York, in the inquiry that took place in 1809, before a Committee of the whole House of Commons, was not likely to diminish his anxieties. It was not difficult to supply his loss when death closed his weary eyelids. He was respected, indeed, and liked as an amiable and upright man; but Nature had not given him rare ability, nor was his understanding marked with much strength or vigour.

It was during his premiership that Sir Robert Peel entered on public life. He had just taken a double first-class at Oxford when his father, who was in parliament, proposed to bring in the young man also as a supporter of the government. Sir Arthur Wellesley, the Irish Secretary, was written to, that a seat might be secured, for ministries at that period manufactured most of their adherents out of Irish boroughs.* Young Peel, therefore, was elected for Castlebar by dutiful voters, and lent the aid of his rare diligence and ability to the Portland administration. Lord Palmerston, as Junior Lord of the Admiralty, embarked in the same boat. The King was in consternation when the duke retired, for he feared lest Lord Grenville, with his ceaseless worry about Catholic Emancipation, should be returned on his hands. He dis-

* *Blackwood's Magazine*, Sept., 1860, p. 258.

liked Lord Grenville as much because he talked of relieving Catholics as the Prince of Wales disliked him because he did not talk indecently.* He implored his Tory ministers with piteous earnestness not to desert him. "For God's sake," he said to Lord Eldon, "don't run away from me! Don't reduce me to the state in which you formerly left me! You are my sheet-anchor!"† The failure of the Walcheren expedition and the consequent rupture between Lord Castlereagh and Canning added greatly to his distress.

The latter of these statesmen, being a scholar, underrated the abilities of the former, whose mind was less richly *stored; and the meeting they had on Putney Heath in September, 1809, issued in the resignation of both of them, and the breaking up of the Portland cabinet. The capture of the Danish fleet was as creditable to Canning as the disaster of Flushing was damaging to Castlereagh; but the public thought the duel was a folly on one side and a fault on the other—a fault aggravated in the case of Lord Castlereagh by the fact of the nation paying, from first to last, twenty millions for the failure of our arms and the loss of our soldiers by disease in the dismal marshes of Walcheren.‡ On him the disgrace of the expedition chiefly fell, and Canning never ceased to remonstrate against his con-

* "Auckland Correspondence," vol. iv. pp. 378-9.

† Twiss's "Life of Lord Eldon," vol. ii. pp. 93-4.

‡ Bulwer's "Canning," Parts i.—xv.

tinuance in office, till they met in mortal combat, and exploded the administration in which they had taken so active a part.

The ministers, however, in retiring, felt obliged to recommend the King to sanction a coalition with Grenville and Grey. To this George III. was, as usual, extremely averse; nor would he consent to it, except on terms which he well knew the Whig leaders could not accept. The paper in which he replied to the recommendation of his cabinet was couched in strong language, and showed the sincerity of his erroneous convictions. Rather than assent to any such measures as had lately been urged on his disapproving conscience, he would "go on with his present servants at all hazards, throwing himself upon his people and his God—his people *whose rights he never knowingly injured*, and his God, to whose presence he was determined, whenever called hence, to go with a pure conscience." Good old bigot, whose righteous instruments were oppression by penal laws, and pure religion at the point of the bayonet! Why, he asked, did not Lords Grenville and Grey follow Mr. Pitt's example, and refrain from persecuting him with this harassing question? *He* had promised in writing and by word of mouth that he would never again moot the subject. The convictions of those two noble lords were but of yesterday; *his own* were the fixed principles of a long life.

Grenville and Grey were not so compliant as Pitt had been. Perceval, therefore, was made prime minister, and

Lord Eldon continued to sit on the Woolsack. The Whigs had now received three solemn warnings not to "persecute" the King by objecting to persecute Catholics. Pitt, eight years before, had sent word to Dr. Troy, the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, that he felt it impossible to continue in office, because he was unable to propose measures for Catholic relief with any prospect of advantage.* Earl Grenville had lost his place in 1806 merely for endeavouring to place the military commissions held in England by Catholic officers on the same footing with those permitted by the Irish Relief Act of 1793; and now, in the third place, the disheartened defenders of Catholic rights were solemnly debarred from the council-board because smitten with the leprosy of Christian charity. "The question in politics," writes the Rev. Sydney Smith, "is, if the Catholics will be given up? That the whole business will be brought to that issue I do not doubt;—that everything (in spite of Lord Wellesley's acceptance) will be offered to the late administration, if they will give up *the gentlemen of the crucifix*."† Many lukewarm Whigs blamed Lord Grenville for not yielding the point. Sheridan laughed at his scruples, and limited his own project of Catholic Emancipation to relieving the Irish peasantry of tithes. To admit the Catholic gentry, he said, to be judges, generals, and members of parliament, was like "decorating the

* "Lord Plunket's Speeches," note, p. 106. Duffy, 1859.

† Letter to Francis Jeffrey, Esq., 20th November, 1809.

topmasts of a ship when there are ten feet of water in the hold, or putting a laced hat on a man who has not a shoe to his foot.”*

As to Plunket, he had retired in despair from an intolerant parliament and the service of a sovereign whom, if the Duke of York is to be credited, the Catholic question had driven mad. He had cast in his lot with the Grenville ministry, and ceased to be Attorney-General when “All the Talents” beat a retreat. His persuasive voice, which on one occasion converted as many as six votes to his side, was heard no more within the walls of St. Stephen’s, but in his Irish home he meditated on the misery around him, and acquired strength for fresh struggles after liberty at a future day. “When he heard the name of religion mentioned”—they are the words of his own speech in parliament in April, 1807—“he felt that everything dearest to his heart was touched; but the name of religion was thus dear to him, from its dictating and concentrating all the amiable charities of life, from its breathing the spirit of toleration and mutual affection, not as being the rallying word of a persecuting party.”

Mr. Perceval’s path was clear. He was not to be hampered with liberal colleagues, but could pursue without interruption the policy he had announced in March, 1807, when he warmly attacked the poor innocent little clause in the Mutiny Bill as “one of the most dangerous measures that had ever been submitted to the judgment of

* “Annual Register,” 1807, p. 238.

the legislature!" Canning and Castlereagh, it is true, were Secretaries of State; and these young Tory tribunes had one thing in common. They were both favourable to Catholic Emancipation; but if they accepted it as one of the Pitt traditions, they also, like Pitt, held it in abeyance till a more convenient season should arrive. They loved office as a stage on which they could display their rival talents. There the unalterable dignity of Castlereagh, his weighty arguments, his calm and cool discussion, commanded admiration; and there also the restless spirit of Canning found vent in animated and brilliant speeches, charming multitudes whom they failed to convince.

The Opposition which Perceval had to encounter was just strong enough to add to his power. No English premier would wish his measures to be adopted without discussion; nor could anything be more fatal to his fame than tame acquiescence. Lord Howick was the leader of the opposing party in the Commons till his father died, when he took his seat in the House of Peers as Earl Grey, and left his adherents in great perplexity as to whom they should choose in his place. For want of a better, they consented to regard George Ponsonby as their chief; and he, without any remarkable talents, held his place at the head of the Opposition during ten years. Sheridan, Windham, Whitbread, Tierney, and Lord Henry Petty, afterwards Lord Lansdowne, fought under his banner a weary fight in the midst of a parliament more than

commonly prejudiced, and with scarcely a hope of success.

The King's infirmities and insanity had increased, and it was only in rare lucid intervals that he was allowed to hold a short conversation with Eldon and Perceval on public affairs. They possessed his confidence entirely. He was satisfied, he said, that everything had been done for the best; and we are scarcely less satisfied that everything was done for the worst. Mr. Perceval^{*} was sometimes restrained by the composure of Castlereagh and the more enlightened views of Canning; but his own tendencies and policy were but a reproduction of the worst features of Pitt's administration, with this difference—that in Pitt's case they were adopted for a time and under a kind of protest, while in Perceval's case they were the natural and constant result of his personal convictions.

"His range of mental vision," says Lord Brougham, "was confined in proportion to his ignorance on all general subjects. Within that sphere he saw with extreme acuteness,—as the mole is supposed to be more sharp-sighted than the eagle for half a quarter of an inch before it; but as beyond the limits of his little horizon he saw no better than the mole, so, like her, he firmly believed, and always acted on the belief, that beyond what he could descry nothing whatever existed; and he mistrusted, dreaded, and even hated all who had an ampler visual range than himself."*

* "Historical Sketches," vol. ii. p. 67.

A glance at his history will make this clear. When a young man at the bar he often spoke severely of Liberals, and called them Jacobins. The first time he opened his lips in parliament it was to support a bill of Pitt's for the better prevention of sedition and mutiny in the King's service. This was in 1797, when he was thirty-five years of age. Several years later, when supporting the Addington administration, he denounced Fox's expressions in favour of Reform as "dangerous and alarming words." When the Whigs, under Fox and Grenville, were in office, he justly cast in their teeth the use they made of ministerial influence in elections in defiance of all their fine professions of integrity when in opposition; but he opposed, as already mentioned, the paltry concession that the ministers wished to make to Irish Catholic officers, and by his zeal against Catholic Emancipation he rose to the pinnacle of power. He regretted that Fox had been betrayed into a correspondence with Talleyrand,* and maintained that the Whig ministers had been the dupes of French artifice. Peace there could never be—at least honourable peace between France and England—so long as Talleyrand and Bonaparte directed the French counsels and arms.

He opposed the grant to Maynooth College in one parliament, and withdrew his opposition in the next, lest, as he said, "it might be construed into spleen," if he made one only invidious exception to the usual grants.

* Sir H. L. Bulwer's "Life of Talleyrand," p. 236.

"Was it, however, prudent," he asked, "to double the number of Popish priests educated at the College? Was this the way to extend the Protestant religion in that country? Only a hundred Protestant clergymen were educated there annually, and they proposed to educate four times that number of Popish priests! If the establishment was thus to be increased, government ought, he thought, to have some hold on it, in some shape or other, that they might at least know that they were not nourishing in their bosom a society of Jesuits."

In like manner, when Mr. Perceval seemed to favour the reform of some horrible abuse, and allowed some remedial measure to be brought forward, he took care to weed it, if he could, of every clause that might render it effectual. Thus, early in 1809, he aided in emasculating a bill for preventing the sale of seats in parliament. Thus also, in May of the same year, when he and Lord Castlereagh were charged with having sold a place in the House, and with having required the purchaser to resign his seat for having voted against ministers, he caused the proposal for an inquiry to be rejected by an immense majority, while the excuse pleaded was, "that such things had been done by all administrations."

During his government, good opportunities of improving society were suffered to pass by, or discarded as intrusive visitors. Wilberforce was feebly backed in his noble efforts to suppress the slave-trade and free the slave. Sir Samuel Romilly laboured with little encouragement,

and even less success, to purify a statute-book which contained more than six hundred offences punishable with death. Even pickpockets were consigned to the gallows by the laws of the merciful Elizabeth, and soldiers and sailors found begging without leave were in danger of the halter. Parochial legislation was deplorable, and magistrates were invested with alarming powers. Perceval left it to his successor to rectify some of these abuses, nor did he care to soil his ruffles with the dust of law-books. It was reserved for Sir Robert Peel and Sir James Mackintosh to reform the criminal code by their five bills,* and thus to acquire for themselves and their country the glory of mitigating severities which Perceval defended. He and his colleagues were so committed to the scandalous traffic in boroughs, that Romilly used to complain that there was no other way in which a man could sit in parliament as an independent member except by purchasing his seat, and thus filling it as it were in his own right. Tierney once offered £10,000 for the two seats of Westbury, and offered it in vain, for the ministers had bought up all the seats that were in the market at any prices asked.

When Lord Cochrane, in July, 1807, moved for an inquiry into the places and pensions held by members of parliament, by their wives and their children, Perceval foiled him by declaring that he would willingly publish a list of *all* government places and pensions. Sir Samuel well knew how long it would be before the account would be made

* "Life of Peel" (Routledge, 1850), pp. 86—92.

out, and that the pensions and places to which he wished attention to be directed would be unobserved in the long catalogue. When Sir Francis Burdett, in 1811, was committed to the Tower for breach of privilege by the Speaker of the House of Commons, with as little justice and less provocation than in the case of Wilkes, Perceval's government, far from screening the rich and eloquent baronet as it should have done, connived at and applauded the measure. The premier was always armed with a shield to fling over corruption, and a lance to hurl at reform. "He saw no reason for reform," he said in June, 1809. "The people were more united against reform than upon any other question. They thought it unnecessary, and he denied that it would lessen either tumult or bribery. It would raise the plan into too much importance to give it a moment's further consideration."

With these sentiments we cannot feel surprised at the prominent part which he took in the proceedings against John Gale Jones and Sir Francis Burdett. The conflict involved a principle, and the case might be called *Privilege versus Right*. The House of Commons was the plaintiff; the People, so far as Sir Francis Burdett represented them, were the defendant, and battled for their wounded rights. A member of a debating club had ventured to censure Mr. Charles Yorke, who was one of the cabinet, for enforcing the order for the exclusion of strangers from the House of Commons during a debate. The indignant Yorke ferreted out the name of this audacious critic, and

found it to be John Gale Jones. He was summoned before the House, charged with a heinous breach of its high privileges, and sent to Newgate in spite of his most humble apology. Sir Francis Burdett remonstrated. He contended that the House had exceeded its powers, and that Gale Jones ought to be discharged. Sir Samuel Romilly was of the same opinion ; but Sir Francis having addressed a letter on the subject to his constituents, the electors of Westminster, was denounced as a libeller by Mr. Lethbridge, and lodged in the Tower, by the votes of 190 members against 152. A more wanton outrage on the liberty of the subject could hardly have been committed ; yet Perceval eagerly urged it forward, and called Sir Francis Burdett's frank and temperate appeal " one of the grossest attacks ever made upon the character and privileges of the House."

He, with the other cabinet ministers, had a long debate in the Privy Council as to the mode of arresting him, for the baronet was resolved to yield to nothing but force. His house in Piccadilly was surrounded by soldiers, Bow Street runners and sergeants burst into his room, tore him from the midst of his family, and hurried him to Tower Hill, amid shouts of " Burdett for ever ! " The military fired upon the people with savage ferocity ; numbers were wounded, several killed, and verdicts of murder and wilful murder were returned in the coroner's inquests against soldiers in the Life-guards. The illegal imprisonment of Gale Jones had been the cause of all the commotion ; and

if Sir Francis Burdett had chosen to avail himself of the opportunity which his maltreatment gave him, if he had inflamed the indignant populace in the double character of martyr and champion, Lord Castlereagh and Mr. Perceval, with other ministerial seat-jobbers, would probably have suffered severer retribution than the rebukes of upright citizens.*

Who can wonder that "the most honest of public men," † Sir Samuel Romilly, withdrew from Mr. Perceval's society, and did not think it right to be intimate in private with one whose public conduct he so thoroughly disapproved? ‡ Indeed, there was little in the premier to respect, and less to admire. He owed his place to the natural pliancy with which he yielded to a bigoted parliament, of which one half the members were placemen of wealthy peers, and the other half were slaves of constituencies maddened by the "No Popery" cry. Those senseless words were placarded on every wall in the kingdom, as if "Popery" included the idea of every evil to be averted. They stood in the place of argument, defaced all the tablets of the mind, and blurred all fairer writing on the conscience. They impeded all social and political improvement, and well-nigh governed England at a time when there was no man to govern her—when the King was insane and violent, when the Prince of Wales was

* "Life of Perceval," by C. V. Williams, pp. 162—173; Cobbe's *Weekly Register*, February, May, 1811.

† Robert Bell, "Life of Canning," p. 286.

‡ Sir Samuel Romilly's "Memoirs," vol. iii. p. 38.

not yet appointed Regent, and parliament could not agree as to whence he should derive the powers necessary for that high office.

In May, 1811, another attempt was made to relieve Catholics of their grievances. Mr. Perceval scouted the notion of their having any political *right*. There was reason to believe that if they had power they would abuse it, and it would therefore be absurd to admit their claim to it. He acknowledged their courage in the field and their loyalty to the King, but they would overthrow the Establishment to-morrow if they could. *He* would tolerate them, but hold them in subjection. Subordination on their part was essential to the peace of all. The more any great sects were brought to equality of honour, the nearer they were to strife. The people were in favour of Protestant domination, and a spark would suffice to kindle their dormant zeal into a flame.

Such were his arguments. His adherents thought them strong, and his foes fancied that his time was short. They expected that when the Prince became Regent he would change the ministry. He would be true to the traditions of his youth. He would reverence the memory of Fox, whose marble bust adorned his dining-room in Carlton House. He would recall Grenville, and inaugurate a reign of justice. Vain hope! The supremacy of parliament had been re-asserted and defined. It had decided that the Prince had no power without it, and how much power he should have with it, and by its authority. Par-

liament, and not primogeniture, had made him what he was. It was Tory at heart, not Whig ; so was the nation. It was sectarian and intolerant ; so were the people. Could he dare, then, to scheme against the power that created him ? Was he not, as Regent, the breath of their nostrils ? Would a Protestant Tory parliament and people tolerate a Whig Regent with a Popish wife ? Impossible. The moment had arrived for *ratting*, and the higher his position the less need he condescend to explain his change.

So long as the Prince could hope to gain further concessions of power from parliament, he affected, perhaps felt sincerely, displeasure at the ministry and their Regency Bill. The restrictions it placed on him were degrading, he said ; he was not even treated as a gentleman when the Queen was empowered to appoint to offices in the royal household. The bill was passed for one year only ; yet, during this brief period, his personal liberty and political influence were to be abridged. He would certainly choose his own ministers : he could not accept as counsellors those who had offered him an indignity. He actually sent for Grey and Grenville. Lord Moira, under his regency, was to be Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, nominated his staff, and appointed the day for their first meeting. The old King heard of these doings, and in a lucid moment told Lords Eldon and Liverpool that, if the Prince turned Perceval out, he would recall him and his colleagues at the close of the twelvemonth.*

* Jesse's "Life of George III.," vol. iii. p. 565.

Meanwhile, to the astonishment of all, and the delight of the vast majority, the dutiful Prince turned short round on his old friends, sent a curt message to Grenville and Grey, desired they would spare themselves the trouble of forming a cabinet, and announced to Mr. Perceval, on the 3rd of February, 1811, that he intended to retain him in office, and that he could not consistently with the laws of filial piety pursue a policy which was sure to harass his royal father's mind and aggravate his malady. The reason thus assigned appears to have been the true one, but the blatant public extolled his Royal Highness's virtue more highly than, perhaps, it deserved. The King was no better in the following year; yet in February, 1812, the Prince Regent addressed a letter to his brother the Duke of York, in which he laid bare his wish that "some of those persons with whom the early habits of his public life were formed would strengthen his hands and constitute a part of his government." He desired, he said, "a vigorous and united administration, formed on the most liberal basis;" and Lords Grenville and Grey were to figure most prominently in the Whig section of it. But these noble lords had abundant experience of the Prince's hollowness, and firmly but respectfully refused his gracious offers.

Prime ministers, like kings, pay dearly for their greatness; and a part of the price is their exposure above other men to the assassin's aim. Perceval's fate was to be that

of Buckingham; another Felton was tracking his steps. About five in the afternoon of the 11th of May, 1812, he had walked from his house in Downing Street, and was entering the lobby of the House of Commons. The place seemed security itself; when a person, who had placed himself in the recess of the doorway, drew out a small pistol, and shot the premier through the heart. He staggered a few paces, exclaimed "Murder!" and fell to rise no more, as Count Rossi fell, on the very threshold of the deliberative assembly where he filled the highest post. Though carried immediately to the room of the Speaker's secretary, and attended promptly by surgeons, he expired in ten or twelve minutes, in the presence of his brother, Lord Arden, and several members of both Houses of Parliament. Lord Arden placed his hand on the wound, and exclaimed in bitter grief, "My brother, you are gone, gone to heaven; but your children——" "His children," replied a member standing near, "are his country's;" and so it proved. Little blood escaped externally; and the assassin for some moments was not recognised. When seized, he yielded without resistance; and when asked if he was the villain who shot the premier, he replied, "I am the unhappy man." He was taken to the bar of the House, and though cautioned not to criminate himself, persisted in avowing his guilt, and asked leave only to plead somewhat in his excuse. He was at last persuaded to postpone this till his trial; and being sent to Newgate,

escorted by Life-guards, precautions were taken to prevent his committing suicide.*

But who was the assassin? and what madness had excited him thus to throw a family into affliction, and cut off from the state an active and honourable life? His name was Bellingham. Distress as a merchant, long imprisonments, and cruel disregard to his petitions on the part of the authorities, had driven him to desperation. Soon after his marriage with a young wife of twenty years of age, he was torn from her and his infant children, and immured in a dungeon at Archangel, in the north of Russia. The civil governor, Baron Asch, befriended him. His cause was brought into court after six months of dungeon life; he was freed, and obtained a verdict against the military governor, who had injured him for the purpose of extorting money. On his arrival in St. Petersburg he commenced proceedings against his former persecutor; but, before any decision could be obtained, he was again dragged from his home, thrown into confinement, accused of having quitted Archangel clandestinely, and kept a prisoner during two years, without a shadow of proof against him. Two thousand roubles were fixed by the Chamber of Commerce as the price of his deliverance, but this he was unwilling and unable to pay. Meanwhile he was haled about the streets with felons, and bandied

* The whole scene is graphically described in "The Assassination of Mr. Perceval," in *All the Year Round*, Dec., 1866. The premier's name is always spelt Percival by Sir Lawrence Feel and many other writers. In the peerage books it is Perceval.

to and fro between the hateful dungeons of the north. He applied to Sir Stephen Shairpe, as he had previously applied to Lord Leveson Gower, but could obtain no redress.

Mrs. Bellingham, who had long waited for his release, was obliged to leave for England in a state of pregnancy and with an infant in her arms. At last he was declared a bankrupt, though neither claimants nor creditors were forthcoming. Again he applied to Lord Leveson Gower before quitting St. Petersburg, but could not prevail on the ambassador to interfere in his behalf. His complaint in England was laid before Lord Wellesley, then before the Privy Council, and, finally, before Mr. Perceval, the Treasury, and the Prince Regent. Disappointment in every instance wrought him into frenzy, and prompted him to what appeared to his diseased imagination an act of justice. The circumstances here detailed are given according to Bellingham's speech on his trial, and need to be controlled by the statements made subsequently by Lord Leveson Gower in a letter addressed to Lord Castlereagh.* His wrongs assumed in his eyes an undue magnitude, and murderous accents sometimes escaped his lips while standing at the bar, in spite of his disavowal of all *malice prepense*. The application to delay the trial till evidence of his insanity could be brought from Liverpool was refused; and he was, as Lord Brougham tells us, "condemned, executed, dissected, all within one

* May 17, 1812.

week from the time that he fired the shot. So great an outrage upon justice never was witnessed in modern times." *

The House of Commons was singularly liberal to Mr. Perceval's desolate family. £50,000 was granted to his widow, with an annuity of £2,000 for herself, and £1,000 a year for her eldest son, to be increased to £2,000 at her death. But the charitable intentions of the House were frustrated. These large sums had been voted with a view to maintaining twelve fatherless children. But Mrs. Perceval was soon tired of wearing weeds, and quickly placed herself and her dowry at the disposal of a second bridegroom.† Mr. Perceval's remains were interred in a family vault at Charlton, in Kent, and a monument to his memory was erected at the nation's expense in St. Peter's Church, Westminster. The only question now was, who should succeed him as premier.

* "Historical Sketches: Mr. Perceval."

† Croly's "Life and Times of George IV.," p. 385.

LIVERPOOL AND CANNING.

“ Enough for me, whose heart has learn’d to scorn
Bigots alike in Rome or England born ;
Who loathe the venom wheresoe’er it springs,
From popes or lawyers, pastry-cooks or kings ;
Enough for me to laugh and weep by turns,
As mirth provokes or indignation burns,
As Canning vapours, or as France succeeds,
As Hawkesbury* proses, or as Ireland bleeds ! ”

THOMAS MOORE.

“ Burke spoke for abstracts in the good and fit,
Fox for all humankind, for England Pitt ;
None of those causes much required defence
When Canning cull’d his flowers of eloquence ;
Each of the three had self-esteem and pride—
Canning had these, and vanity beside.”

LORD LYTTON, “ St. Stephen’s.”

* Afterwards Earl of Liverpool.

XIII.

LIVERPOOL AND CANNING.

THERE are some among the English premiers of whom the historian feels that he has to record their names oftener than their vices demand or their virtues deserve. He has little to say against them, and as little to say in their favour. They have one unpardonable fault, and that is mediocrity. They are tame and flat, and, do what he will, he cannot make them stand out boldly on the page. Such were Lord Wilmington and the Duke of Devonshire under George II.; the Duke of Grafton, Lord Shelburne, and the Duke of Portland under George III. Stanhope's and Sunderland's administrations are but episodes in the history of Sir Robert Walpole; the reign of Lord Bath is ended in forty hours; the Duke of Devonshire, like a faint star, pales in the awful light of Chatham; Grafton stands beside him like a boy at the feet of a colossus; Shelburne dwindles down, first before Fox, and next before Fox's young rival, Pitt; the Duke of Portland, though at the head of the Treasury, is but a supernumerary in the Coalition Cabinet of Fox and North; Addington is Pitt's lieutenant; Grenville falls at the first

thrust when Fox is no more; Lord Goderich comes on the stage only to disappear as quickly; and Melbourne, with all his courtesies and long experience, can bear no comparison with Grey as a leader of the Whigs, or with Peel as a deserter of the Tories. There was little in Mr. Perceval that was dramatic, except his assassination; and Lord Liverpool is known to posterity chiefly as giving a name to a cabinet, while his colleagues, Castlereagh and Canning, were making a much greater figure in the world than he.

We remember him principally for his prosecution of Queen Caroline, and his constant resistance to Catholic claims. While yet on the threshold of office, he declared his hostility to these claims; and the steps he took towards forming a ministry, by the Prince Regent's desire, make us acquainted with his incurable bigotry on the one hand, and with the liberal sentiments of some eminent statesmen toward Catholics on the other. They bring before us again Lords Grenville and Grey negotiating, indeed, with Liverpool, yet ultimately refusing to countenance his narrow policy. They lay before us the letters of Lord Wellesley and Mr. Canning, in which they distinctly decline taking part in an administration whose badge was to be no surrender—in other words, no justice to Catholics. "To join it," Canning wrote,* "would be to lend myself to the defeating of my own declared opinions on that most important question." Lord Wellesley's

* May 18th, 1812.

words* are still more remarkable, and deserve to be quoted :—

“At the remote period of the year 1797, upon the eve of my departure for India, I stated to the late Mr. Pitt my solicitude that he should direct his attention to the settlement of Ireland. And I expressed to him my conviction that Ireland could neither be happily settled nor firmly united to Great Britain without a concurrent settlement of the claims of his Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects. . . . You must remember that I have always lamented as serious national calamities, menacing the constitution of the monarchy, the reference which has necessarily been made to the existence of those personal sentiments (of the King on the subject of Catholic Emancipation), and the causes which have occasioned that necessity. With the warmest sentiments of personal veneration, attachment, and gratitude, my opinion has always been, that the duty of loyalty and affection towards a British sovereign *does not consist in submissive obedience, even to the honest prejudices or errors of the royal mind*, but rather in respectful endeavours to remove those prejudices and errors by free advice in council, and by temperate remonstrance in parliament.”

Mr. Canning spoke to the same effect in the House of Commons on the 20th of May :—

“In affirming,” he said, “that the Roman Catholic claims should not now be agitated, ministers beg the whole question. I do not say that immediate concessions should be made; all I claim is, that this body of people should be sheltered under the protecting wing of the legislature; that their case should be placed in the hands or in the portfolio of the executive government. By these means, and these only, can you insure to Ireland a happy and peaceful summer, and to the empire confiding and lasting tranquillity.”

Lord Liverpool was forty-two years of age when, on June the 8th, 1812, he became First Lord of the Treasury. He was born in the same year with Canning and Huskisson; his early friends and associates in parliament.

* May 21st, 1812.

Madame de Staël, who visited England when he was premier, asked him one day, "What has become of that *very* stupid man, Mr. Jenkinson?" "Madame," said the minister, highly flattered, "he is now Lord Liverpool." But Madame de Staël deserved a sharper rebuke. Lord Liverpool was *not* a stupid man. He was constantly pitted against Canning in a debating club at Oxford. He had written a work, highly praised in the *Edinburgh Review*,* on the "Coins of the Realm." He had negotiated the Peace of Amiens as Foreign Secretary in the Addington administration.† He declined the premiership which the King offered him on the death of Pitt, and contented himself with accepting the lucrative office of Warden of the Cinque Ports.‡ He had taken the lead in the House of Lords during the government of the Duke of Portland, and he held the seals of the War Department in the Perceval ministry. He had not a spark of genius; but he was certainly no fool.

His cabinet was formed on the basis of Catholic exclusion; yet it was in some respects a hopeful one for the Catholic cause. Its members were free to espouse that cause if they thought proper;§ and thus time and opportunity were given to men like Canning, Palmerston, and Plunket to work upon thoughtful minds, and to prepare the nation for the eventful change of 1829. The long hold of

* January, 1806.

† "Public Characters," 1799-1800, "Lord Hawkesbury," p. 137.

‡ Jesse's "George III.," vol. iii. pp. 471-72.

§ Yonge's "Life of Lord Liverpool." Ann. 1812 and 1825-26.

religious intolerance on the public mind was loosened, and freedom of discussion in the ministerial ranks led to the repeal of the Test and Corporation Act during the Wellington administration. It was curious through the long period of Lord Liverpool's supremacy, and for some years previously, to see statesmen sitting on the same Treasury benches dispute in public on a question of vital importance, involving the political rights and interests of many millions of English subjects. It argued little for the moral and mental soundness of leading men when the Secretary for the Home Department denounced as perilous the concessions advocated by the Irish Attorney-General; when the Secretary for Foreign Affairs came to the House on crutches to plead for that people of Ireland which its Chief Secretary described as a rabid and rebellious horde; when the minister, in fine, who had been chiefly instrumental in carrying the Union, declared, just before his elevation to the peerage, that Catholic Emancipation must pass sooner or later, and that the sooner it passed the better; while Eldon on the Woolsack shuddered at the report of such rashness, and heard from afar, in dismal foreboding, "the tramp of seven millions of men."*

It does not redound to the honour or wisdom of the Lord Chancellor and the premier that they allowed such golden opportunities of improvement as they possessed during their long tenure of office to pass by without even attempting to turn them to account. "Gattons and Old

* Hoey's "Memoir of Lord Plunket," p. 19.

Sarums," says a frank writer of their own school, "accumulated by half-dozens in the hands of individuals, had become intolerable; and the continued refusal of members to such places as Manchester and Birmingham was not only a crime but a blunder." * To rectify such evils would have cost no sacrifice of principle; but it happened strangely enough that members of the cabinet who were favourable to Catholic claims were often adverse to parliamentary reform. It was so with Castlereagh and Canning; nor was the House of Commons ever more surprised than when Plunket appeared as the defender of "the Manchester Massacre," and by one of his ablest speeches saved the ministry. His thunders (so thought his friends) blasted the wrong tree. "Had Lord Liverpool," says Mr. Gleig,† "begun to enfranchise populous places as often as small boroughs laid themselves open to disfranchisement, the country might have arrived, by degrees, at a state of things which would have obviated all risk of such a crisis as that of 1831-32. And to this, as well as to any measure calculated to effect a wise distribution of political influence throughout the country, the Duke of Wellington would have rendered all the assistance in his power." ‡

Lord Liverpool was early in life an opponent of Catholic claims, yet not a virulent opponent. It was rather in a

* *Blackwood's Magazine*, September 1860, p. 268.

† "Life of Wellington," p. 624.

‡ See also the speech of Canning on the third night of the debate on the Reform Bill, March 1831.

friendly spirit than otherwise that he dissuaded the leading Catholics of Ireland, in 1804, from agitating the question of their rights at that moment, because he knew that Pitt had promised the King he would never again bring the subject forward, and because he felt sure that his Majesty was immutably resolved to make no concessions. His advice, however, was disregarded, and he therefore spoke, in 1805, in the House of Lords, against admitting Catholics to political privileges, in reply to Lord Grenville.

During the administration of that nobleman, Lord Hawkesbury (Liverpool) was leader of the Opposition, and in compliance with the demands of his party, supported the old exclusive system of "Church and State." Lord Grenville's ministry, as we have seen, broke up, like that of Pitt in 1801, on the question of removing Catholic disabilities; and when Grenville and Liverpool changed places—when Grenville from being premier became chief of the Opposition, and Lord Liverpool was the most prominent member of the Portland cabinet—he avowed his "conviction that a Protestant government alone was consistent with the laws and constitution of the British empire," and that Catholics ought still to be excluded from parliament and from offices of state. True to his colours, in 1812, he again opposed Emancipation. He predicted that it would lead to the disestablishment of the Protestant Church in Ireland, or to the establishment of the Catholic Church. In forming his cabinet in

1812, after the death of Mr. Perceval, though each member of the government was left free to advocate Emancipation if he chose, it was excluded as a cabinet measure, and the premier himself opposed it as before.

In 1824 he had so far relaxed his opposition that he spoke in favour of Lord Lansdowne's two bills for giving English Catholics the elective franchise, as it had been given to the Irish, and for opening to them magistracies and other inferior offices, besides allowing the Duke of Norfolk to exercise his functions as Earl Marshal. The bills were rejected, but the Duke was suffered to fulfil his hereditary office. In 1825 Lord Liverpool had in no degree altered his mind about resisting the advances of Catholics towards political power; he spoke against Emancipation, and again predicted the destruction of the Established Church in Ireland if it were carried. In 1826, however, just the year before his death, he submitted to the King an important paper, in which he reminded his Majesty that the cabinet he had framed in 1812 regarded Catholic Emancipation as an open question from the first. He declared that he could not now be a party to any other arrangement, and he humbly suggested that the King should advert to the actual state of the opinions of public men in the two houses of parliament, particularly of those in the House of Commons, upon the Roman Catholic question, and that he would seriously consider whether it would not be at least as impracticable as in 1812 to form an administration upon the exclusive

Protestant principle. Thus Lord Liverpool himself and his neutral, or divided, cabinet led up to Emancipation in the year after his death.

It is curious to remark what a future premier, Lord Palmerston, who had long been serving under the Tories as Secretary at War, was thinking and writing of them in the year 1826:—"I can forgive old women like the Chancellor (Eldon), spoonies like Liverpool, ignoramuses like Westmoreland, old stumped-up Tories like Bathurst; but how such a man as Peel, liberal, enlightened, and fresh-minded, should find himself running in such a pack is hardly intelligible. I think he must in his heart regret those early pledges and youthful prejudices which have committed him to opinions so different from the comprehensive and statesmanlike views which he takes of public affairs. But the day is fast approaching, as it seems to me, when this matter (Catholic Emancipation) will be settled, as it must be. . . . The days of Protestant ascendancy, I think, are numbered."*

Canning did not for some time take part in Lord Liverpool's administration. He was jealous of Lord Castlereagh, and wanted the leadership of the House of Commons;† but he accepted an embassy to Lisbon, and joined the ministry at a later period. He was certainly its brightest star in point of talent; and as he became

* Letter to the Hon. W. Temple, October 21, 1826.

† "Life of Wilberforce," vol. iv. p. 34; *Edinburgh Review*, October, 1856.

Lord Liverpool's successor in 1827, I cannot do better than trace the current of his life from childhood downwards. It will float us past many striking incidents and remarkable persons with whom he was connected, and will end its course on the eve of Catholic Emancipation, when the Duke of Wellington rose to the highest office in the state.

George Canning used to describe himself as "an Irishman born in London," just as Dean Swift was an Englishman born in Dublin. His father had inherited the estate of Garvah in Ireland, and descended from those Canynges of Bristol whom Chatterton and the muniment-room of St. Mary Redcliff have made famous. George Canning, the father, was a poet and politician, like George Canning the son. His life in London was full of reverses and trials; but he was consoled by a dutiful and affectionate wife, and died exactly one year after the birth of a son, of whom it was predicted, while yet a youth, that he would one day be England's Prime Minister. It was on the 11th of February, 1770, that George was born; and if talent and misfortune have claims to respect, he had reason to be proud of his parents. Yet his political adversaries were mean enough in after years to taunt him with the lowness of his extraction; and to this he alluded admirably in a speech after the chairing at Liverpool in his forty-sixth year.* "If," he said, "to depend directly upon the people as their representative in parliament; if,

* June 12th, 1816.

as a servant of the Crown to lean on no other support than that of public confidence—if that is to be ‘an adventurer,’ I plead guilty to the charge, and I would not exchange that situation, to whatever taunts it may expose me, for all the advantages which might be derived from an ancestry of a hundred generations.”

Mrs. Canning’s widowhood did not last long. She took to the stage to avoid destitution; but Garrick, under whose auspices she made her *début*, was obliged to reduce her to inferior parts. Among the actors who surrounded her, she chose for her second husband one of the most fascinating and most worthless. Little George’s stepfather, Mr. Reddish, was at once a profligate, a spendthrift, a swindler, a drunkard, and at last, as might have been expected, a maniac in an asylum. His death was a great relief to Mrs. Reddish, and enabled her to indulge once more her weakness for matrimony. Her third husband, Mr. Hunn, was a silk mercer at Plymouth, who frequented the theatre very constantly, and there met with his bride. He was even induced by her example to try the stage himself; but making little impression on the public, he returned to his wares, and continued in mercantile pursuits till the day of his death. Mrs. Hunn died in Bath, at a good old age, in March, 1827. She was in her eighty-first year, and had during the long period that elapsed from the death of her first husband, the joy of seeing her son George rise continually from high to higher, break “his birth’s invidious bar,” force his talents on the

notice of mankind, reach at last "Fortune's crowning slope,"

"Mould a mighty state's decrees,
And shape the whisper of the throne." *

But Mrs. Hunn had a deeper joy still, and it consisted in this—that George never slighted her. "He made it a sacred rule to write to her every week, no matter what might be the pressure of private anxiety or public business." † He was as dutiful and loving to her as Thomas Moore was to his mother under circumstances not wholly dissimilar. His letters were her solace and delight, and she carried them with her wherever she went. In them he told her all—his pleasures, his vexations, his prospects and triumphs. At school, at college, in his embassy at Lisbon, during the toils of the Foreign Office, his heart unfolded itself to his mother, as the leaf turns towards its parent sun. When she was acting at Plymouth, he would leave his studies at Lincoln's Inn to visit her; and when she resided at Winchester, before settling finally in Bath, he would often quit the society of peers and senators, to sit beside old Mrs. Hunn, and to chat and walk with her and her lowly cousins through the streets and marketplace of a county town. In 1801, when he retired from the office of Under-Secretary of State, he accomplished his long-cherished purpose of withdrawing her from the stage, and requested that the pension of £500 a year, to which he was entitled, might be settled on her. She had

* "In Memoriam," lxxiii.

† Bell's "Life of Canning," p. 34.

all the mental energy and conversational gifts which might be expected in the mother of so devoted and eminent a son.

When George was between seven and eight years old, and under the guardianship of Reddish, Moody the actor took compassion on him, and undertook to negotiate in his behalf with his uncle, Mr. Stratford Canning. He assured him that the boy under such tutelage was on the high road to the gallows, and that his talents, which were above all question, would only contribute to his ruin. The uncle listened, and was persuaded. He would take charge of his nephew, on condition of all intercourse with his mother's connections being broken off. George was sent to Hyde Abbey School, near Winchester, and in the holidays, in the house of his uncle, who was a wealthy banker, he frequently saw Burke, Fox, General Fitzpatrick, and Sheridan. By Fox's advice he was removed to Eton, where he was at once placed in the Remove as an Oppidan when between the years of twelve and thirteen. The boy was in all respects the father of the man. With refined taste and brilliant wit, he applied as diligently to study as if he had no genius to rely on. Thus his success was sure. In September, 1786, we find him writing: "I am now at the top of Eton School. I am the first of the Oppidants (Commoners as you call them)." *

In a debating society where the young Etonians

* Unpublished letters of George Canning in Charles Knight's "Half-Hours with the best Letter-writers," p. 423.

mimicked the forms and oratory of parliament, George Canning often appeared as "the master bowman," cleaving the mark which the shafts of other bowmen missed. While at Eton, and in his sixteenth year, he supplied the largest share of the *Microcosm*, a weekly paper,* which has passed through several editions. It was formed on the model of the *Spectator* and *Rambler*, and the copyright of it was sold to Mr. Charles Knight, of Windsor, on the day after it was discontinued, for fifty guineas. The boyhood of the writers was scarcely discoverable from their essays, but political leanings here and there escaped. Canning's poem on "The Slavery of Greece," and his speeches in the debating society, gave decided proofs of his bias toward the politics of Sheridan and Fox. No periodical composed by boys has ever attracted more attention than the *Microcosm*, and it stands beside the Rowley poems and "Queen Mab" as a monument of precocious talent. Miss Burney used to read it aloud to Queen Charlotte; and George III., during the time of its appearance, visited Eton, and listened to the first oratorical efforts of its chief writer.†

At Oxford Canning fully realised the promise of his Eton days. His orations were applauded by every one, and his "Iter ad Meccam" is called by one of his biographers "the best Latin prize-poem Oxford has ever produced." At Oxford, too, he formed many friendships which lasted

* See Sir H. L. Bulwer, "Historical Characters," vol. ii. p. 208.

† Madame d'Arbly's "Diary and Letters," vol. iii. pp. 236, 413.)

through life. It was there he became intimate with Lord Liverpool, then the Hon. Mr. Jenkinson, with whom he was afterwards so nearly connected in political life. The Toryism of Oxford and of his new friends overgrew in some measure the Whiggism of his earlier days; but what overgrowth can wholly efface the first impressions of an ardent and thoughtful mind?

From Oxford Canning removed to chambers in Lincoln's Inn. One day—so runs the story—he received a mysterious note, stating that the writer, of whom he knew very little personally, would breakfast with him next morning, being desirous of having some confidential intercourse with him on a subject of great importance. The self-invited guest was none other than William Godwin, the author of that “Political Justice” which the young atheist, Shelley, took as his polar star.* The object of his visit was to propose that Canning should accept the post of leader of “an oppressed people,” exasperated by the “growing corruption and tyranny” of the government. They looked to him and to his shining abilities as to a standard-bearer under whom they might march to victory. Canning was staggered by the proposal. It threw him into a state of profound thought. It produced the very opposite effect to that which Godwin intended. It made him recoil from the desperate counsels of men given to change, and decided him on offering his services to Pitt as an adherent of his anti-Jacobin policy.

* Memoir prefixed to his works.

It was the turning-point in his life ; for though he had previously declined a seat in parliament, when it was offered him by the Duke of Portland, then leader of the Whigs, though he had refused to join the society of the Friends of the People, he had not yet taken any decided step in a political direction. His interests lay clearly with the friends of his youth, with Fox and Sheridan, with Erskine and Curran, from whom in the day of their success he might hope to reap abundant reward ; but in deserting them for the ranks of the Tory ministry he followed an innate bias, and the promptings of sincere conviction. To these Sir Henry Lytton Bulwer adds another motive—that Sheridan endeavoured prematurely to bring him forward as a Whig in opposition to Lord Liverpool, then Mr. Jenkinson.*

He well knew, moreover, that Pitt, in the midst of his severely repressive policy, had popular leanings and broader views than circumstances allowed him to develop. Alliance with the stronger and safer side suited the prudential character of his mind, while it seemed also to promise him scope for the indulgence of some of his liberal aims. It was not necessary for him to abandon the cause of mankind because he took arms against republicanism abroad and rebellion at home. He could unite with Pitt without any violent inconsistency—without abandoning, as Lord Castlereagh did, a party whose violence he had promoted—without appearing, like the young viscount,

* “*Historical Characters: Canning*,” vol. ii. p. 211.

as the firebrand of "United Irishmen" on one side of the Channel,* and then, on the other, performing suddenly a shameless somersault. No "patriots" and "martyrs," duped into rebellion in 1798, execrated the name of Canning, as they did that of Castlereagh, on their way to "the high gallows-tree."

The terms being settled between the premier and the convert, a borough was soon placed at his disposal. He took his seat, in 1793, as member for Newport, in the Isle of Wight. He was a great acquisition to Pitt, who often had to do all the fighting in the House himself. His opponents were picked men, more numerous and alert than any of his followers. Jenkinson, indeed, had plenty of common sense, and Huskisson was deep in commercial affairs, but Castlereagh was reckless and flippant; and a Canning was wanted to confront invective with argument, to roll classic periods, and hurl the scathing bolts of wit. Never did a policy need more expert defenders than that of Pitt. Popular as the war was, few people knew what we were fighting for. No definite ground for it has been assigned down to the present day.† Burke would have it that we fought for the restoration of the Bourbons; this Pitt emphatically denied. Canning and Jenkinson declared that our object was the destruction of Jacobinism, and that the war was in fact a war against principles. When the premier was hard-pressed, he evaded this

* Bell's "Life of Canning," p. 94.

† Goldwin Smith's "Lectures on Pitt," p. 86.

assertion of his allies, and contented himself always with affirming that we battled for peace—that the road to peace was war—that the olive-branch, in effect, flourished best on a drained exchequer and a field of carnage!

But he was uniformly supported in the main by Canning, who beat the drums of war in reply to the humane Wilberforce, kept alive the fond hope of England invading France and storming Paris, and pleaded for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, as an "obvious necessity," during a period of extravagant loyalty. But his Toryism, like that of his leader, was often ministerial rather than personal. He threw himself into the position of a party, without always adopting its ideas. To his presence there, together with Huskisson's, may be ascribed in part the change in a liberal direction which has gradually come over the Tory policy, and in which Roman Catholics especially have reason to rejoice. But for men like Canning, the Pitt traditions respecting Catholic Emancipation would have rotted in the earth, and the agitation of Daniel O'Connell would probably have been terminated by the scaffold.

Canning's adhesion to Pitt was almost servile. He defended him for prosecuting Horne Tooke, in 1794, though he had himself taken Tooke's line in 1782. It was proper, he said, to discuss reform in time of peace, improper to do so in time of war and tumult. If Mr. Pitt should return to his former opinion, it was probable that he should agree with him. This was hero-worship,

indeed, such as might have satisfied a Carlyle. When he seconded the Address in 1794, he breathed so defiant a tone in reference to the war, that Wilberforce felt compelled to propose an amendment, and express, to Pitt's deep regret, his distinct disapproval of the young tribune's manifesto. He was rewarded, in 1795, for his fidelity to his master, and accepted the office of Under-Secretary of State. During the two following years, Canning seldom appeared as a speaker in parliament. He was mainly immersed in the business of office.

While the cabinet was combating "French principles" with armies and fleets, Canning, for his part, assailed them with more rational and effective weapons. Cannon-balls could not destroy them, but ridicule might. State trials and riot-acts spread them wide, but drollery and satire exposed their weakness, and held up their absurdities to scorn. Hébert had taught Canning a lesson, and he profited by *Père Duchêne*. About three years after the author of that infamous journal had expired on the scaffold,* Canning and his friends started the *Anti-Jacobin*. It appeared weekly,† and differed from the scurrilous organ of the Cordeliers in that it ridiculed literary as well as political vices and fashions. It was edited by Mr. Gifford, but Canning was its soul. It eschewed the grossness, while it rivalled the fun and buffoonery of the Parisian model; and if many of its pages are disgraced by savage ribaldry, it is to other hands rather than Can-

* March 24th, 1794.

† The first No., November 20th, 1797.

ning's that all the "dirty work" must be ascribed. Most of the pieces, however, were joint compositions; and the difficulty of assigning each, and the parts of each, to their respective authors, proves how harmoniously they worked together, and how strictly they kept the secrets of the workshop.*

When Canning aimed at pathos, his success was but middling, as in his lines on the death of his son in 1820; but his satirical verses were first-rate,—witness the parody on Southey's Sapphics, "Needy Knife-grinder! whither are you going?"

The following verses by Canning were found among the papers of Mr. Wilberforce. They are preserved in his family as an heir-loom, have never, I believe, appeared in print, and were written under these circumstances. Mr. Rolleston, Fellow of University College, Oxford, was residing in Mr. Wilberforce's family, and acting as tutor to the eldest son, when ill health obliged him to seek change of air. As he purposed visiting Lisbon, his pupil's father gave him a letter of introduction to Canning, then living at Gloucester Lodge, with a request, which was readily granted, that the statesman would furnish him with some letters of recommendation to be presented at Lisbon. Immediately after Mr. Rolleston's interview with Canning, the latter sent a groom after him on horseback with these elegant and playful elegiacs,

* "Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin," edited by Charles Edmonds; *Edinburgh Review*, July, 1858; *Cornhill Magazine*, January, 1867.

to which the motto from Horace was prefixed by the author himself.

LIFE IN LISBON.

"Me tabulâ sacer
Votivâ paries indicat uvida
Suspendisse potenti
Vestimenta maris Deo."—Hor. *Carm.* i. 5.

"Lubrica Lisboæ lustras quicunque viarum
Strata peregrino nocte dieve pede,
Lentus eas, cave ne titubes, nam forte labantem
Excipit immundo semita senta situ.
Perge tamen, modo tarda satis vestigia ponas,
Neu novitatem inhians segne moreris iter;
Namque vagos oculos dum tu fers omnia circum, et
Membranæ inscribis visa notanda novæ,
Pestem adeo ærumnasque parans lectoribus ægris,
Panditur, eu, subito celsa fenestra sono.

"Infelix, eheu ! non te graviore procellâ
Obrueret ruptis si tonet Ætna jugis,
Nec tanto sponsum Xantippe irata rigavit,
Nec tali Danaes Jupiter imbre sinum.
Et dubitas fugere, et trepido stas usque furore,
Obtestans hominum jura Deumque fidem,
Quippe mali auctorem rogitas, rogitantis in ora
Plenior alterius Naiados urna ruit.

"Hoc sat erit, nunt tu demissis auribus ito
Contentus, madidum concutiensque caput.
Servatusque domi tandem, depone fluentem
Cæsariem, fronti quæ fuit aptus honos.
Exue odoratas vestes, haud ignis odorem
Infectum, aut visis eluet amnis aquis.
Hasque ita disponas (paleâ farcire memento)
Ut speciem referant effigiemque tui.
Adde pedum soleas concretâ labe rigentes,
Pileolus rorans grande coronet opus.
Denique votivum carmen subscribe ; Viator
Hæc spolia aurifero consecrat uda Tago."

In 1798 Canning took a new start as a public orator. His arguments spread over a wider field, his grasp was firmer, his diction more lofty and sustained. The ministry was pressed night after night with harassing motions adverse to the war. The French arms were victorious everywhere, and the income-tax filled up the measure of the people's endurance. Pitt was inclined to peace, though he would not avow it; but Lord Grenville, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, under whom Canning served, was, though a Whig, inflexible in his resolution to prosecute the war. Canning knew the bias of each, and leaned, as usual, to that of Pitt. But his position obliged him to defend the war, when it was least defensible, and to throw a veil over the differences in the cabinet.

Tierney, in December, moved a resolution to the effect that the European Confederacy was virtually broken up, and that we could no longer carry on the war with any hope of driving France back within her ancient limits. A debt of £150,000,000 had been incurred in six years, Ireland was in rebellion, the Habeas Corpus was suspended. It was frantic to persist. True, the Crown had the right to make war, but the Commons had the right to refuse supplies. Canning's reply was a master-piece of telling oratory. It was equally brilliant and specious. If we had heard it delivered we should no doubt have thought it sincere. But Time has lifted the curtain of the council-board, and we know that it was nothing more than the fencing of a gladiator. His private letters have

revealed it all. The war, he said, was European; the peace must be European also. We could not retire from the conflict alone. We could not desert our allies without perfidy, nor abandon the hope of delivering Europe, through a mean and dastardly anxiety to deliver ourselves.

Canning spared no pains in preparing his great speeches. He was absorbed in them for two or three days beforehand. The "rapt oration flowing free," which he delivered so gracefully, and which appeared to be quite spontaneous, had been turned and twisted, polished and pointed, in his study, as though it were a prize poem. The matter was always arranged under distinct heads; and he often held the paper in his hand containing the topics on which he intended to touch; but the variety of their style, the transition from indirect quizzing to stabbing irony, the occasional but rare bursts of vehemence, and the happy allusions to recent remarks made by less gifted opponents, imparted to his replies a natural and impromptu air. He had a fine head, which was marked by high intellect; and Wilberforce said there was a lighting up of his features, and a comic play about the mouth, when the full force of the approaching witticism struck his own mind, which prepared his hearers for the burst which was to follow. They little knew what art was used in his oratory, nor that as many as five hundred points were sometimes noted down by him as topics of a single speech.*

* Stapleton's "Life of Canning;" "Nugæ Criticæ," p. 403.

It was not Canning's fault, any more than Pitt's, that Ireland was duped by the Union. He desired and even intended that it should be sealed by Catholic Emancipation. Yet he could scarcely venture to allude to this subject in any but the vaguest terms, through fear of exciting a storm of Protestant indignation from the Treasury benches. He did allude to it, however, in January, and again in April, 1799, and affirmed thirteen years after, in his speech on the Catholic claims, that "expectations had been held out, the disappointment of which involved the moral guilt of an absolute breach of faith."* "Does history," asked Goldwin Smith, in speaking of the wrongs of Ireland, "Does history afford a parallel to that agony of seven centuries, which has not yet reached its close? But England is the favourite of heaven, and when *she* commits oppression it will not recoil on the oppressor!"†

In 1801 Pitt resigned, on the ground, shall we say, or the pretext of attachment to the Catholic cause? Canning, his devoted follower, insisted on retiring with him; but he did so in opposition to the ex-premier's advice. He could not get at Pitt's motives for quitting office. Indeed, the great man kept his own secret so well, that posterity is not much wiser than Mr. Canning as to *why* he gave place to "the Doctor."‡ Perhaps he wished that state apothecary to compound the

* Speech on Lord Morpeth's motion, February 3, 1812.

† "Three Eminent Statesmen," p. 63.

‡ Sir H. L. Bulwer, "Canning," Parts i.—ix.

medicine he was ashamed to administer himself—the Peace of Amiens. It is hard to suppose that he cared much about Catholics, or he would not have flung them over so lightly three years later, when he returned to power. If he had insisted on their claims in 1801, the King must have yielded, and have owned (had his reason been preserved) that his coronation oath, if broken at all, was more honoured in the breach than in the observance. Mr. Canning withdrew from the ministry; but he carried with him into retirement a real treasure.

Miss Scott, whom he had married a few months before, was daughter of General Scott, and co-heiress with her sister, Lady Titchfield, afterwards Duchess of Portland. Her father, an eccentric man, had provided in his will that if either of his two daughters should marry a nobleman, her moiety of £200,000 should fall to the other. But Joan, the younger, refused to profit by this arbitrary arrangement. She insisted on the legacy being equally divided, though her sister had been so naughty as to fall in love with a marquis. The transaction was creditable to both; and Canning's house at 37, Conduit Street, and his villa at South-hill, were gladdened by the presence of a bride whose devotion to him knew no limit and no decay. He deserved this reward; for his youth had been unsullied, and he preferred the quiet of his own fireside to the excitement of banquets and ball-rooms. There is an ex-premier now living, I mean Mr. Disraeli, who, like Canning, ascribes no small part of his happiness in

private, and of his success in public life, to a partner in whom intelligence and affection are admirably combined.

Canning's great business, when out of office, was to bring back Pitt. In the House and out of the House he ridiculed the feeble Addington, who, as "The Grand Consultation" has it, was "*doctoring* old England to death." Sheridan too, though a steady supporter of his measures, was always at him. "Doctor, the Thanet fly from thee!" he cried, stretching across the table, when some Scotch members deserted the government. The House was convulsed; nor did they laugh less when he parodied Martial with, "I do not like thee, Doctor Fell," and the rest of the couplets. The verses were spouted really in defence of the premier, whom so many attacked without assigning a reason, but they supplied his adversaries with another nickname by which to harass him.* But Addington was strong at Windsor, though weak at St. Stephen's. He held on in the King's name, while his enemies, like raging seas, were eager to engulf him. At last he sank, though not before asking Pitt to give him a helping hand. A peerage was administered as a restorative,† and produced the desired effect. Pitt took the helm, and Canning stepped on board.

But the ship was poorly manned. Where was Fox? The King would not have him, and Lord Grenville refused to wear the uniform without him. So Canning

* See Sir H. L. Bulwer on "Canning," Parts i.—xi.

† January, 1805.

became Treasurer of the Navy, and was soon to be brought into the cabinet. But things were not going on well. Pitt's health and spirits declined, and he died of old age, as Lord Malmesbury said,* at forty-six.

Canning could make no terms with Pitt's successor; nor, while such talent as his was withheld from Fox's cabinet, could it, as Fox very properly observed, be justly styled "*all the talents.*" "I was devoted," he said, "to one man, while he lived, with all my heart and all my soul. Since the death of Mr. Pitt, I acknowledge no leader: my political allegiance lies buried in his grave."† His opposition to Fox and the Grenvilles was unceasing, and sometimes sadly embittered with the spirit of party. He even went so far as to censure one of Fox's noblest acts—his communicating to Talleyrand the fact of a plot having been contrived to assassinate the First Consul.‡ Fox was personally known to Bonaparte; he had waited on him at the Tuileries during the short Peace of Amiens; and to have kept in his own bosom the secret of assassins would have been to make himself a partner in their crime. But Canning was possessed by a principle fatal to political integrity. He held adhesion to a party as a paramount duty, and choked the utterance of his own most sacred convictions lest, by expressing them, he should strengthen the hands of his enemies. He gave Fox the feeblest possible support on a question in which

* "Diaries," vol. i. p. 346.

† Speech at Liverpool, 1812.

‡ Diary of Right Hon. W. Windham, February 17, 1806.

he heartily agreed with him—that of the hateful Slave Trade. But he had by his speeches in 1799 so powerfully seconded the untiring efforts of Wilberforce, in and out of season, that the echoes of his eloquence on that topic still rang in members' ears, and mingled in their memories with Cowper's "Negro's Complaint."

Our fathers tell us that, in the beginning of this century, elderly people used to inquire of children, "Well, are you for Pitt or Fox?" The names of the two leaders divided the whole of society into two classes. They were not so much Whigs and Tories—the advocates of two sets of principles—as the followers, one might almost say worshippers, of two men. When both had departed—when Fox had breathed his last in the very same chamber at Chiswick where Canning was to expire twenty-one years afterwards—parties were broken up, and able men on either side had full scope for forming new combinations.

It were to be wished that Canning had consorted with nobler spirits than Sidmouth and Perceval, and that he, who saw more clearly than others the expediency of Catholic Emancipation, had not allowed himself to be lifted into office on the No-Popery tide.* Lord Malmesbury had said of him that he was "very clever, and very essential to government, but hardly yet a statesman." In spite of this opinion, however, he recommended him to choose the Foreign Office rather than the Admiralty,

* See "Letters of Peter Plymley."

when the Duke of Portland offered him his choice of either. He had no cause to regret the advice which he gave.

At a singularly trying period, Canning displayed the utmost promptitude, judgment, and skill. The Czar and the French Emperor had divided Europe between them, at the Treaty of Tilsit, in July, 1807. Darker deeds had been wrought in the imperial pavilion on the raft of the Niemen than even the cabinets of Europe were aware of. Secret articles were added to the treaty, and by one of these, revealed at a later period, it was agreed to combine all the European fleets, including those of Denmark and Portugal, against the British navy. But the English ministry received private intelligence of Napoleon's design, and insisted in vain on Denmark's alliance or neutrality. In August our fleet appeared in the Sound, bombarded Copenhagen, captured the whole Danish navy, and brought it into Portsmouth Harbour.

The Opposition stormed ; Canning explained ; and on being asked to produce the secret articles in the treaty by which he defended himself, and the existence of which the French government denied, he declared that he and his colleagues "would never suffer the secret of their information to be torn from their bosoms." Many years elapsed before it came to light. The "*Memoirs of Fouché*," which appeared in 1824, mentioned "the secret stipulations of Tilsit, by virtue of which the Danish fleet was to be placed at the disposal of France." His family, it is true, have declared that these memoirs of the ex-

minister of police are spurious;* but since their publication it has been discovered that the Regent of Portugal communicated the Emperor's design to the Prince of Wales, and the Prince to the Duke of Portland in May, 1807.

Napoleon was furious at being outwitted by Canning; but it was not the last time that he had to acknowledge with grief that statesman's sagacity. He thought it his paramount duty to resist Bonaparte, and Spain occupied by Sir Arthur Wellesley seemed to offer the fairest field for resistance. The French had poured down from the Pyrenees, plundered the state coffers, sacked the towns, kidnapped the royal family, and usurped the government. The patriotism of Spain was aroused, and the aid of British arms under such a general was welcomed with joy.

But if Sir Arthur Wellesley did honour to Canning, and more than realised the hopes formed of his prowess, Lord Castlereagh was a thorn in the Foreign Minister's side, the reproach of his party, and the calamity of England. Not content with incurring two charges of corruption brought against him in the House of Commons, from which his colleagues had great difficulty in extricating him, he must needs embroil them in one of the most stupid and disastrous expeditions in the history of British arms. A fleet of four or

* Lord Stanhope thinks that they were "perhaps compiled in part from Fouché's notes," *"History,"* vol. i. p. 15, note.

five hundred pendants, with 40,000 men on board, was sent in July, 1809, to reduce Flushing, to capture the French ships of war in the Scheldt, and to destroy their dockyards and arsenals. Lord Castlereagh was present at the embarkation, and was generally held responsible for the whole proceeding. Lord Chatham, who had no knowledge of military affairs, commanded the army, which took Walcheren, while Flushing surrendered to the fleet.

But in taking Walcheren the troops took the fever also which haunts its dreary swamps. Month after month passed, and no orders were given for evacuating the plague-stricken spot. Antwerp was left to the enemy, and no effort was made to advance up the river. The naval and military captains were alike paralysed :—

“Lord Chatham with his sabre drawn
Stood waiting for Sir Richard Strachan ;
Sir Richard, longing to be at 'em,
Stood waiting for the Earl of Chatham.”

But by the end of August the earl was tired of waiting, and returned quietly home. Two hundred men a day were then falling sick of the distemper ; yet there they remained, clinging hard to Flushing without any conceivable object, despairing, moaning, frenzied, dying, till by the end of the year eight or nine thousand of them had perished, and two or three millions of money had been flung into the sea. Canning had all along protested against Lord Castlereagh's incompetence in the War

department,* and when this fact was made known to his lordship he sent his resignation to the King and a challenge to Mr. Canning. Why the Minister for Foreign Affairs should be challenged for doing his duty no one could conceive, and still less why he should commit the double crime of suicide and murder as a penalty for having done his duty.†

Yet so it was. Castlereagh was so wicked, and Canning so weak, as to meet on Putney Heath on the 21st of September, 1809, in sight of the house where Pitt expired, and there do their best to put each other to death. They both fired, once and again; nor was honour satisfied on either side till streaming blood and a ball in Canning's thigh closed the contest. On the 11th of the next month he resigned the seals of his office, and the Duke of Portland retired with his laudanum-bottle from public life. The Portland Administration was broken up, re-cast, and moulded anew by Mr. Perceval's plastic hand.

During the years 1810 and 1811 Canning's voice was not often heard in parliament. As Walpole had his Houghton, Pelham his Esher, Chatham his Hayes, Fox his St. Ann's Hill, and Pitt his Holwood, so Canning also felt

"A distant dearness in the hill,
A secret sweetness in the stream,"

* Sir H. L. Bulwer, "*Historical Characters*," vol. i. p. 261.

† *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 263.

and delighted to gather his choicest friends around him in the green and sunny seclusion of Gloucester Lodge. Even the amusements there had an intellectual character, and ministers, ambassadors, and members of parliament were often seen playing with their host after dinner at "Twenty Questions." Men of genius were always welcome at his table, and had no reason to complain of him, as so many had complained of Walpole and Pitt, that he was but a lukewarm patron of literary merit. He liberally supported the Literary Fund and the Royal Institution of Liverpool. He was one of the forty members of the club founded by Johnson and Reynolds. He did his best to get an appointment in the East India Company for James Mill, the historian of India, although he was notorious as a Reformer; and he interested King George III. in behalf of a son of Sir Walter Scott, when the great Magician of the North was half ruined by his publishers. He gave the first impulse to the *Quarterly Review*, and contributed to it together with Gifford and Heber, Malthus, Mathias, and the Ellises.

Scandal was never busy with his name, and, unlike Pitt and Fox, he observed habitually the duties of his religion. Wilberforce was highly gratified by the religious habits of his household, and the allusion to "Christ's pardoning blood," in the lines on the death of his son, seem to prove his belief in the central doctrine of Christianity. Though he usually supported the Perceval ministry, he was entirely opposed to them on the currency question; and his speech

on the Report of the Bullion Committee, in which he pleaded the claims of gold *versus* paper, is in itself a complete refutation of Sydney Smith's sarcastic description of him. He was never more unfair than when he said that Canning was "eminently deficient in solid and serious qualities," that "Providence had made him a light, jesting, paragraph-writing man, and that such he would remain to his dying day." Of course statesmen who write pasquinades and parodies, such as Canning wrote upon the German drama, must expect to make enemies; and we cannot feel surprised at Niebuhr's criticisms on him * being almost as captious and crabbed as those of the witty Canon of St. Paul's.

Before Mr. Perceval's death Canning seized an opportunity in February, 1812, of delivering a speech on Catholic Emancipation, in which he developed the ideas of Pitt in a very precise and luminous manner. He refused, as I have said before, to accept office under Lord Liverpool if the Catholic question was to be shelved; but when it was agreed that each member of the cabinet should vote as he pleased on that matter, Canning accepted an embassy to Lisbon. The change of air and climate was likely to benefit his son's health; and the hardship of serving under Lord Castlereagh, then Minister for Foreign Affairs, with whom he had the deadly encounter on Putney Heath, was softened down by an annual allowance of £14,000. It was his nature to side with success,

* "Geschichte des Zeitalters der Revolution," vol. ii. p. 242.

and the brightening prospects of England and the Allies contributed, no doubt, to reconcile him to the Liverpool cabinet.

His trip to Portugal in 1814 was soon over, and he returned to vindicate in person on the boards of the House his right to act independently of precedent and party. Though Sydney Smith did say that he could bring up nothing solid from the shining shallows of his mind, he created a new and middle party, incongruous, no doubt, in its elements, yet clear of several old prejudices, both Whig and Tory. It disjoined things which generally go together—resisted Reform, but cried up Free Trade and Catholic Emancipation. It was a glaring inconsistency, repressing freedom on one side of St. George's Channel, and reviving its hopes on the other. It was not so bad but that it might have been worse, nor so good but that it might have been much better. It made the legacy of taxation bequeathed by the war more onerous by refusing to redress any grievances, and making it penal to complain of them. It procured for Lord Sidmouth the epithet of "the rat-catcher," so celebrated was he for training spies and hunting down puny offenders. It gave Lord Castlereagh the prominent place in the cabinet, and enabled him, in his vapid and lumbering speeches, to denounce as disaffected those who were only aggrieved. It magnified discontent into sedition, and sent spies through the country to create disturbances in order that the government might inspire terror by repressing

them.* It made capital out of the Cato Street conspiracy; and the trial of Thistlewood and his associates for their absurd scheme of putting the ministers to death was speedily followed by an effort on the part of the Duke of Wellington to organise immediately the whole of the militia of the United Kingdom as a precaution against further outbreaks.†

In conjunction with the rulers this party enacted measures of coercion deplorably severe; and on the 9th of August, 1819, it charged with a band of yeomanry into a peaceable assemblage of 60,000 or 80,000 persons in Peterloo, near Manchester, trampling and hewing on all sides, till about 400 men, women, and children were killed, wounded, or otherwise injured. Henry Hunt, who had called the meeting, was arrested on a charge of high treason, released, and carried through Manchester in triumph. The government, of course, found defenders of this reckless outrage,‡ and it is to be regretted that Canning and Plunket were among them. The former had, soon after his return from Lisbon, been made President of the Board of Control, and the ministers found in him one of their ablest allies when they fought

* McGilchrist's "Life of Lord Palmerston," pp. 60, 65; Bulwer's "Canning," Parts ii. xi. xii.

† Pellew's "Life of Lord Sidmouth," vol. iii. p. 326; Bell's "Life of Canning," p. 300.

‡ "This outrageous scene." Rev. T. Flanagan's "English and Irish History," p. 877; Mr. J. C. Hoey's "Notes on Plunket's Speeches," p. 162.

with unarmed multitudes and passed their six famous coercion acts.

But Canning and Plunket remained true to the Catholic cause, though the Prince Regent, far from being inclined towards it through his marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert, appeared to be more than ever hostile to it after her dismissal in favour of Lady Hertford.* It is difficult to say too much ill of that heartless voluptuary. His vices and selfishness inclined many persons towards Queen Caroline, who would otherwise have cared very little about a German lady who romped with gentlemen at blind-man's buff, ate onions, and drank ale, which she called *oil*.† Canning knew her in the days of her innocent indiscretion. He felt that she might have been respectable at least in her exalted position. He knew how, even before her wedding-day, her feelings, and principles also, if she had any, were outraged by the Prince's brutal behaviour. He had heard of his staggering into his sleeping-room drunk the very evening after his marriage, and of his lying half the night "under the grate where he fell."‡ He strove to the utmost to keep the unhappy Princess within the bounds of decorum; and when he found, to his regret, that his counsels were disregarded, he still refused to take any part against her.

* Sir S. Romilly's "Memoirs," vol. ii. p. 152.

† See this account confirmed by the Hon. Amelia Murray in her "Recollections," p. 47. McGilchrist's "Life of Lord Brougham," p. 85.

‡ Lady Charlotte Bury, "Diary of the Times of George IV.," vol. i. p. 37. Goldwin Smith on "Pitt," p. 77.

When she returned to England after her residence abroad, he tried to bring about an arrangement and to induce her to quit the country with an allowance of £50,000 a year. When she refused and was brought to trial, he resigned his place in the ministry, rather than share in the proceedings against her. At first, indeed, the King refused to accept his resignation, but he consented to do so when it was tendered the second time. The inconvenience of neutrality in a matter of such moment was too great for a minister to endure. In December, 1820, Canning left the Board of Control vacant, and in the following year Caroline of Brunswick, who insisted on presenting herself at the Abbey-gates to be crowned with George IV., died of chagrin and excitement at being repulsed by the guard.*

But Canning was too great a card not to be played again soon. True, he had lost the King's countenance, because he would not prosecute, or rather persecute, the Queen. But Lord Liverpool plainly told his Majesty that he could not carry on the government without him; and though he had in the meantime been appointed Governor-General of India, though many Tories were rejoicing at the prospect of his departure because he spoke for Emancipation and Free Trade, and many Reformers wished him beyond the seas because he defended rotten boroughs, the people generally admired and respected him; and the

* See *Edinburgh Review*, January, 1859, and Lord Holland's "Memoirs of the Whig Party," vol. ii.

ministry—divided as they were on many points, and agreeing only in hostility to Reform—were fain to receive him among them as Secretary for Foreign Affairs in the place of Lord Castlereagh (then Marquis of Londonderry), on the 16th of September, 1822.*

He was on his way to Liverpool to take leave of his constituents, when he heard the news of that minister's ghastly suicide at North Cray, in Kent. Nowhere was he met with such ovations as in Liverpool; nowhere did a more enthusiastic crowd of admirers gather round him. Liverpool was to him what Bristol was to Burke; and it is not without interest to us to remember that he usually stayed with his friend Mr. Gladstone, at Seaforth House, where he could look out on the broad expanse of waters, and see little William, now the Right Hon. William Ewart Gladstone, playing on the beach.†

When Canning was appointed Governor-General of India, he wished to make an effective speech, and chose the Catholic question for his subject. He moved, on the 30th of April, 1822, for leave to bring in a bill relieving Roman Catholic peers from the disabilities imposed on them by the Act 30 of Charles II., with regard to the right of sitting and voting in the House of Peers. The speech which he made on the occasion was particularly brilliant, and he gratified the public with a correct report of it. But his motion was carried by a majority of five

* Stapleton's "Life of Canning," vol. i. p. 131.

† McGilchrist's "Life of Gladstone," p. 18.

only in the Commons, while in the Lords the innocent proposal was rejected by a majority of forty-two. It is remarkable that in bringing forward this measure Canning did not consult with the noblemen whom the bill was intended to relieve.

As Minister for Foreign Affairs, Canning founded a policy which has become traditional in this country. It took root all the more deeply because it was slowly developed. It diverged insensibly from that of Lord Castlereagh, though the outline which he had drawn up for the instruction of the English envoy at the Congress of Verona remained unaltered by Canning, and was handed on to the Duke of Wellington in the state in which the new secretary found it. Nevertheless, between him and Castlereagh there was a difference. The duke was aware of it; and though he fully understood and loyally carried out Canning's instructions, his own opinions and bias were towards the politics of the former rather than of the latter minister.*

At the Congress of Vienna, Castlereagh had favoured the views of the sovereigns who had formed the Holy Alliance under the influence of Alexander of Russia. They had bound themselves together to resist popular movements; and Castlereagh, acting on the part of the English government, had shown considerable indifference at the congress to the interests and happiness of several

* See "Despatches of F. M. the Duke of Wellington," vol. i. Cyrus Redding's *Personal Recollections*: "Wellington," vol. ii. pp. 57, 58.

populations, whose nationality and freedom the Alliance blotted out. There were limits, however, which the nature of the English Constitution would not allow him nor Lord Liverpool to pass. England could not long side with princes against peoples, and Canning realised this fact more strongly than Castlereagh. The French, backed by the Holy Alliance, were about to invade Spain, in order to force on the people a government to which the large majority was averse. It was simply impossible for England to become a party to such a design, and the duke was instructed to protest against it as soon as it should be mooted, and to withdraw from the conferences if it were pressed. He did so, and a long correspondence ensued between Canning and the French minister, M. de Chateaubriand.

Canning's letters and speeches in parliament brought out by degrees more clearly the theory on which he acted. It was simply that "England should hold the balance, not only between contending nations, but between contending principles; that in order to prevent things from going to extremities, she should *keep a distinct middle ground*, staying the plague both ways." These were his own words. His policy, therefore, was one either of intervention or non-intervention, according to circumstances; but in his case, and more especially in that of his supporter and disciple, Lord Palmerston, it evidently favoured peoples more than princes, and popular more than hereditary right. There is generally a misnomer in the use of

the term non-intervention, for it is, to adopt the playful words of Talleyrand, "un mot métaphysique et politique, qui signifie à peu près la même chose qu'intervention."

The secession of the duke from the Verona conferences was loudly applauded in the House of Commons, and raised Canning high in public estimation. He was regarded as the antagonist of the Holy Alliance and of its fundamental principle—divine hereditary right.* In the cabinets of foreign princes the name of Canning became odious, and he was held up to scorn as the type of insurrection.† Though he remained neutral in the affairs of Spain, the principles he had announced were soon put into practice and applied in different quarters of the globe. Unlike Lord Castlereagh and Lord Eldon, he was willing to recognise the independence of the Spanish-American colonies, and encourage Mexico, Columbia, and Buenos Ayres to follow the example set them by the United States. In Turkey also he had a word to say for the maltreated Greeks, and he obtained from the Porte some mitigation of their grievances. In 1826 a circumstance occurred which enabled Canning to manifest his views in a still more striking manner.

In December the report reached England that Spain had invaded Portugal, in order to put down its constitutional government. We had encouraged Don Pedro to grant it; we had recognised his daughter, Donna Maria,

* Stapleton's "Political Life of Canning," vol. i. pp. 131—35.

† McGilchrist's "Life of Palmerston," p. 79.

as the lawful queen ; Portugal was our ally ; and we had, therefore, the best of all pretexts for interfering. The news of this event arrived on a Friday. On Saturday the English cabinet took its decision. On Sunday the King's consent to make war was obtained. On Monday the ministers came down to the House. A discussion ensued, and Canning announced that British troops were already on their way to Portugal. His countenance beamed with unusual animation, and the despatch of those troops called forth one of his most brilliant speeches.* They were directed not only against Spain, but against the principles of the Holy Alliance. His announcement was met by storms of applause, which knew no bounds when he declared, in reference to his recognition of the independence of Spanish America, that he had resolved that if France took possession of Spain, it should not be Spain *with the Indies*, and that he had "called the New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old."

This sublime clap-trap raised Canning to the height of his fame. The "blaze of glory that seemed to light up his features, when he spoke of the Portuguese charter," was a sign and symbol of the lustre that was gathering round his name. Yet the line of foreign policy which he thus made so popular has often required wholesome checks, and but for the remonstrances of such men as Wellington, Peel, Stanley, and Aberdeen, would often have brought us into difficulties, and covered our face

* December 12th, 1826.

with shame among the nations. Notwithstanding his great ability, the verdict of posterity has not assigned him a place among statesmen of the highest order. There was in his politics a want of breadth and consistency, for which no wit or eloquence could compensate. Nor is there any reason to think that his success would have been greater if his life had been prolonged. He had not sufficient weight as a premier to have carried Emancipation, nor would he have attempted to carry Reform. The former measure demanded the energy and power of a Wellington, and the latter required the consistent politics and wide influence of a Grey.

But Canning was a real power in the State, though not one of the first class. The Duke of Wellington both admired and distrusted him. He thought him unsafe, yet useful; too strong to be shut up in garrison, too weak to be chief in command. His letters* prove beyond a doubt that he earnestly recommended him to the King as Castlereagh's successor, and took the utmost pains to remove George IV.'s personal objections to him.† Lord Eldon opposed the appointment in his narrow and obstinate way; but the duke had far too much sense not to see what circumstances required when Lord Castlereagh was no more, and to conform his views to meet them. He supported Canning faithfully as a colleague, though he withdrew from him when he became premier. He stood

* September 1822; "Despatches," vol. i.

† Sir H. L. Bulwer. "Historical Characters: Canning," vol. ii. p. 342.

aloof from his cabinet, without foreseeing that he should himself become a main instrument in passing those measures of Emancipation and Free Trade to which Canning had so long devoted his energies. Statesmen are often learning lessons from those whom they resist, and conflict is the means of their conversion. If Wellington to the last inclined to Protection, he at all events yielded his judgment so far to that of Peel, that he aided him in removing the last restrictions on the importation of foreign grain.

The Commercial Treaty concluded a few years ago between France and England was a development of Canning's principle of Free Trade. The repeal of the Corn Laws also may be traced to him as its first cause. He held the doctrine of Protection to be unsound in the abstract. He was convinced that commerce flourishes best when freed of toll, customs, bounties, and monopolies. He helped to frame the Reciprocity Act of 1823, by which foreign ships importing cargoes into Great Britain were placed on the same footing as English ships with regard to duties, *provided* their governments behaved as politely to our merchant-vessels in their ports. On the other hand, when foreign states exceeded bounds in laying heavy taxes on our exports, Canning did not fail to give tit for tat. On one occasion, when the Dutch had issued most unreasonable tariffs, he sent a unique dispatch to Sir Charles Bagot, our ambassador at the Hague, and followed it up with an order in council to carry it into

effect. It was written in cipher; and when Sir Charles obtained the key, which he had left at home, he was no less diverted than surprised to read, while in attendance at court:—

“In matters of commerce, the fault of the Dutch !
Is giving too little, and asking too much,—
With equal advantage the French are content :
So we'll clap on Dutch bottoms a twenty per cent.—
Twenty per cent.,
Twenty per cent. ;
Nous frapperons Falck* with twenty per cent. !”

On the 17th of April, 1823, Canning was sharply attacked by Brougham on the ground of advocating Catholic Emancipation without the smallest idea of success; of having, in a speech at Liverpool, intimated his intention of *compromising* his views on the subject; and of exhibiting “the most incredible specimen of monstrous truckling for the purpose of obtaining office that the whole history of political tergiversation could furnish.”³ At these words, Canning, pale with emotion, started to his feet. In a calm voice, however, and with his eye fixed on the orator, he said, “Sir, I rise to say that that is false.” A dead silence ensued. The Speaker interfered. Neither gentleman would retract, and both were ordered into custody till an accommodation between them took place. Happily, in this instance, Canning was not pro-

* The Dutch Minister. The lines are given thus in Bell's “Life” and in Locker's “*Lyra Elegantiarum*,” p. 148; but Sir H. L. Bulwer varies them slightly.

voked as he had been provoked by Lord Castlereagh, with a challenge "couched in such intolerable terms as to preclude all explanation whatever."*

There is nothing in Mr. Canning's political views more difficult to explain than his constant advocacy of Roman Catholic relief, and his resisting as constantly the repeal of the Test Act. He would thus have allowed to Catholics privileges withheld from Dissenters, and in *his* parliament O'Connell would never have sat beside John Bright, and still less beside Baron Rothschild. We feel, of course, very much obliged for the preference shown to us; but it is hard to discover why, having admitted Catholics to join in parliament with Anglicans and Scotch Presbyterians, he should propose shutting the door against other classes of British subjects. In mixed populations the liberties of one class are the best guarantee for the liberties of another. Perhaps Canning thought that the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts would be sure to follow Catholic Emancipation, but that if it took the lead, it was not so sure that Emancipation would ensue.

To him chiefly we owe that salutary measure which saved England from persecuting Catholics, and Catholics from rebelling against England. He did not, indeed, live to carry it, but he bequeathed it to the Duke of Wellington as a necessity of state. Having worked towards it so steadily, it was singular that he should have resisted improvements closely allied to it both in principle

* Letter of Mr. Bagot to Lord Malmesbury, September 20, 1809.

and in fact. In vain the Broughams and Tierneys of his day twitted him with the ridiculous anomaly of rotten boroughs. In vain they reminded him of the borough of Gattton having been offered for sale by the auctioneer as an "elegant contingency," with the power of nominating two representatives in parliament for ever. In vain Fox in his presence described Old Sarum as consisting of an encampment and two or three cottages; and spoke of another borough returning two honourable members, which "sustained its privileges upon the stump of a tree." Such abuses in his view were part of a system, and this he was prepared to defend to the utmost. He believed that a House of Commons representing the people only might and would in the issue, and perhaps by one angry vote, sweep away the throne and the peerage. Yet it would have been more reasonable to hope and expect that the Commons, freely and fairly chosen, would in every generation respect and cherish all the useful and venerable institutions of the land. Even under Cromwell the House of Lords was not wholly abolished, nor would the people have taken arms against Charles I. if he had observed the laws.

It was surprising that Canning, who prided himself on foresight, should not have perceived that in advocating Emancipation he was making Reform inevitable, and that the latter question would in the end divide English cabinets as distressingly as the former had done, unless it were settled betimes. During thirty-five years Emanci-

pation had rendered government difficult and painful. It vexed the spirit of the great Pitt, and without it the Union was no boon to Ireland. It drove King George to the verge of insanity, and made his lucid intervals more mischievous to the nation than his madness. It banished Pitt from office, and upset "All the Talents" in a year and a half. It tied Perceval's hands, and paralysed Lord Liverpool's administration. By leaving it an open question he resigned all hope of a united cabinet; and it is little to be wondered at that he became convinced at length that the time for ceding the point was drawing nigh, and that he would have to support the Catholic claims himself, if not as a premier, at least as a peer.

We have heard also from Peel's own lips, that in 1825 he requested Lord Liverpool to relieve him of office on the ground of his being persuaded that the Catholic question could no longer be deferred. Three years later he announced to the Duke of Wellington his full determination to support the claims he had so long contested, and declared also that in the pursuit of that "great object" he was ready to sacrifice "consistency and friendship." In short the Tory leaders then, like the Conservative chiefs during the past session,* seeing that the measure to which they had been hostile must inevitably be passed, resolved on passing it themselves rather than leave it to be carried through parliament by those whom they thought less prudent and less trustworthy politicians.

* Written November, 1867.

In February, 1827, Lord Liverpool was struck down by apoplexy. He had long held his colleagues together in loose harmony, and, by a happy combination of negative qualities, had made "vacant seriousness" pass for wisdom. The duties of government had devolved mainly on Canning, as leader of the House of Commons. The attention of men at home and abroad had been fixed nearly five years on his policy as Foreign Secretary. He was clearly the man pointed out by public opinion as Lord Liverpool's successor. Many inroads, it is true, had been made on his health; but neither he nor those around him could guess that the cold he took at the Duke of York's funeral in January was to prove fatal in the issue. George the Fourth's prejudices against Emancipation were as strong as ever, and he looked about for an anti-Catholic premier; but none could be found.

His aversion to Canning personally was at an end. Nay, he had made him his pet minister, and admitted him to his chosen circle. He had mind enough to read with pleasure the written account which Canning sent him every night of the proceedings in the Commons.* He was flattered by the prominence which, through Canning's foreign policy, he once more held among the sovereigns of Europe. He appreciated the tact with which the minister ascribed to the sovereign, and not to himself, all the merit of success. He knew him to be in the good graces of Lady Conyngham and Madame de

* Bulwer's "Canning," Part iv. 1.

Lieven, and he bore him a debt of gratitude for having sent Lord Ponsonby, who was supposed to be one of Lady Conyngham's admirers, as envoy to one of the recognised states of South America.*

Canning alone therefore held the key of the situation. On the 27th of March he had a long interview with the King on the subject of a new ministry. He declined taking part in any arrangement from which Emancipation was to be excluded, or in which he was to be a subordinate. He must be First Minister of the Crown, or none. On the 12th of April his appointment was made known. Genius and perseverance had raised the son of a poor actress to a post higher in some respects than that of majesty itself.

It is evident, from his example and that of several other premiers, that no one need despair of attaining that eminence in consequence of personal disqualifications. Lord Wilmington was accounted a cipher by his colleagues and by the public; the Duke of Newcastle was pitifully ignorant, and, according to Horace Walpole, a type of incapacity; the Duke of Devonshire was averse to public business, and, if we may trust the same high authority, was better fitted to hammer nails in a wall than to wield the sword of State;† Lord Bute was the

* Bulwer's "Canning," Part iv. 2.

† Lord Waldegrave's opinion of the Duke is more favourable, though he admits that he was "disgusted by faction, and perplexed with difficulties," and that "great things had never been expected from him as a minister." "Memoirs," p. 141.

most unpopular man in the kingdom ; and George Grenville the most obstinate and impenitent man, considering the world of mischief he wrought. Lord Rockingham—"the poor dumb thing"—was nervous to excess when he addressed the House, and he had so feeble a head for business that neither George III. nor Chatham thought him qualified for a higher post than that of chamberlain ; * Lord North said of himself, "In all my memory I do not recollect a singular popular measure I ever voted for," † and his exterior was as unprepossessing as his politics. Nothing could be more coarse and clumsy. He was "utterly short-sighted," had "two large prominent eyes that rolled about to no purpose, a wide mouth, thick lips, and inflated visage, that gave him the air of a blind trumpeter." ‡ His Grace of Portland was a ducal cipher, a sentinel who performed his duty well enough by sleeping at his post. He was utterly devoid of learning and eloquence, and as inactive as he was incompetent. § Henry Addington rose from the ranks ; his father kept a small mad-house, and, like his son after him, was always ready to prescribe draughts and boluses for a sickly constitution. The Duke of Wellington had led a soldier's life, he was no scholar, and had never received a University education. George Canning, as we have seen, had

* Lord Gower. See Lord Stanhope's "History," vol. vii. p. 143 ; Jesse's "George III.," vol. i. pp. 311-12.

† Speech, March 2, 1769.

‡ Walpole's "Memoirs of George III."

§ "Lord Stanhope," vol. vii. p. 157.

to work his way upward from the society of the green-room and the shop to that of courts and the highest place in the cabinet.

But here his difficulties increased fourfold. Certain as it is that Peel's mind was more than wavering on the question of Emancipation, he would as yet take no share in it as a minister. He even declared in the House that he was still opposed to it; and this may have been quite true in a certain sense. He probably did not think Canning was the man to carry it. He distrusted Canning's foreign policy. He was not disposed to break with his old Tory friends, at least for the present. The evidence in favour of Emancipation which had come before him was weighty enough, yet something was wanting to make it overwhelming. He would not separate from Wellington, and Wellington would not serve under Canning. Lord Eldon, Lord Bathurst, Lord Melville resigned. In short, there was a general clearance. Four members of the Liverpool cabinet only remained. The whole anti-Catholic party deserted the new premier, to the great joy of all sturdy Protestants of the Church and State school. Peel carefully abstained from assuming a hostile attitude, and Canning highly appreciated the good taste and feeling which his conduct displayed.

Every office was filled up by the 27th of April. The Whigs, Grey excepted, received Canning with open arms. The Duke of Clarence became Lord High Admiral; Sir John Copley, under the title of Lord Lyndhurst, took

his seat on the woolsack; Palmerston continued at the War Office, but with a seat in the cabinet; Anglesea, Goderich, and Lansdowne added their names and influence to enhance the brilliancy of Canning's ministry; while Tierney, Brougham, and Sir Francis Burdett took their seats behind the Treasury bench when the premier made his first appearance. The administration thus presented a fair front, but it was hollowness and weakness within. It resembled those Indian armies of which we read in the wars of the Carnatic—imposing in number and splendour of equipment, with every field-piece drawn by fifty yoke of white oxen, and elephants richly caparisoned in the rear ready for service. But, like these also, it was strong in appearance only. It was cheered with no confidence of success; it was surrounded by well-trained and implacable foes, and its leader was already drooping under a mortal wound.

Never was a minister more bitterly assailed in both Houses.* Many of his own party—"his own turnspits," as he called them—barked at him. His enemies hounded him to death; and Lord Grey, forming a singular exception to the Whig party, attacked his foreign policy with peculiar sharpness. He treated it as a plagiarism palmed off on the public as original by a political adventurer, who cast the odium of his foreign policy on his colleagues when it was at fault, and claimed for himself all the merit when it happened to be sound. He

* Bell's "Life," p. 365; Bulwer's "Canning," Parts iv.—viii.

sneered at him as an oppressor who spouted liberalism, and as an advocate of Catholics who was ready at any moment to abandon his clients. He seems to have been actuated by personal dislike to the premier; and the unsoundness of his arguments against Canning's maintenance of peace has been fully exposed.*

Pressure of business, mental anxiety, and bodily weakness made Canning sadly susceptible. In June he brought forward the budget as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and early in July the parliament was prorogued. On the 6th he signed the Triple Alliance between France, England, and Russia for the settlement of the affairs of Greece. This was his last official act. It was hoped that he would recover during the recess; but on the 10th he sat under a tree in the open air when heated with exercise, and brought on a fit of rheumatism. Mr. Huskisson, who was also in ill health, and on his way to the Continent, called to take leave of the premier, and found him in bed. He was struck by the change in his appearance, and observed that Mr. Canning required the air of the Continent more than himself. "O," replied the premier cheerfully, "it is only the reflection of the yellow linings of the curtains!" So they parted—the firm and faithful friends—never to meet again.

On the 20th, the patient was removed to the Duke of Devonshire's villa; and there, in the same small and simply-furnished room where Fox had expired, at the

* Stapleton's "Political Life of Canning," vol. iii. p. 401—25.

same age, and under similar circumstances, Canning also sank by slow degrees. Sometimes he rallied sufficiently to transact business, and even to pay visits and dine out. On the 30th, he had an interview with the King at Windsor; but his majesty perceived that he was very ill, and desired Sir William Knighton to call and see him. His pain increased, became excruciating, and rent his frame so violently as to deprive him at times of consciousness. On the Sunday before his death he heard prayers read by his daughter, according to his custom when unable to attend church. On the 8th of August he passed away, in the Fox chamber, in the fifty-seventh year of his age, and only four months after attaining the pinnacle of his earthly greatness. He was buried in Westminster Abbey on the 16th, at the foot of Pitt's tomb, and a peerage was conferred on his widow. His enemies had been chiefly in parliament; outside it he was popular in his lifetime, and deplored after his decease. But the grave buries many animosities, and his best biographer tells us that Faction herself wept over his remains.

THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON.

“ Mourn for the man of amplest influence,
Yet clearest of ambitious crime ;
Our greatest yet with least pretence :
Great in council and great in war ;
Foremost captain of his time ;
Rich in saving common-sense,
And, as the greatest only are,
In his simplicity sublime.”

TENNYSON.*

“ His position was the highest a subject ever had—above party—looked up to by all—revered by the whole nation—the friend of the sovereign ;—and *how* simply he carried those honours !”

QUEEN VICTORIA—“ Journal in the Highlands,” p. 137.

* It is curious to contrast this just appreciation of the Duke with Byron’s slanderous doggerel :—

“ I have seen Napoleon, who seemed quite a Jupiter,
Shrunk to a Saturn. I have seen a Duke
(No matter which) turn politician stupider,
If that can well be, than his wooden look.”

XIV.

THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON.

THE history of England, from the Revolution of 1688 down to the present day, may be compared to a drama in five acts. The first of these ends with the final extinction of the Stuart claims after the rising in '45; the second is marked by the signal success of British arms under Chatham in every quarter of the globe; the third act comprises the American war; the fourth is the long period of hostilities against France; and the fifth, which to us is the last, has brought Emancipation to Catholics, extended the liberties of the subject, and promoted literature, science, and social improvement at home and abroad. The Duke of Wellington figures prominently in the two last acts. The hero of Waterloo was also the champion of oppressed Catholics. His arms procured us peace; and his counsels issued in Emancipation. He is the first great statesman since Marlborough whose career takes us far off the line of politics. His life divides into two halves—one military, the other political. In both he had a certain greatness, nor is it easy to say whether he served society best in the cabinet or in the camp. Few

great men have pursued so successful a course, and suffered so few reverses. We see in him the model of an English hero, and, as far as human glory and earthly rewards are concerned, nothing is wanting to make the type complete.

birth
 Arthur Wesley, fourth son of the Earl of Mornington, was born in 1769, ~~ten years after the death of Pitt, twenty after that of Fox,~~ and in the same year with Napoleon Bonaparte. *Feb. 1806* Few records of his childhood remain; he made little figure at Eton, and being regarded as the dunce of the family, he was sent to the military academy of Angers in France. When he became of age he was captain of cavalry, aide-de-camp to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and sat for the family borough of Trim in the Dublin parliament. He had by this time rid himself of his character as a dunce, was extremely observant, and read much in a desultory way. In September, 1791, he was appointed colonel of the 33rd regiment of the line, which he soon made the best-drilled and most efficient of all the Irish regiments. The times were threatening; and in May, 1794, Colonel Wesley was ordered to Ostend to confront the French in the Netherlands. His coolness and courage attracted attention; while the total want of discipline in the English army, its miseries and its disasters, made a deep impression on his mind. He contrasted it with the drill, the gallant bearing, and brilliant success of the ragged conscripts of France, and he felt convinced that without military reform our cause was hopeless.

Thus his only disastrous campaign had the effect of making him a strict disciplinarian.*

Next year, having returned to Ireland, he applied to Lord Camden for some post in the revenue or treasury boards, preferring the prospect of a civil life. But his application was not successful. The 33rd was ordered to India; and in February, 1797, Colonel Wellesley (whose family about this time changed the spelling of their name) landed in Calcutta. His brother, Lord Mornington, followed him shortly as Governor-General. Tippoo Sahib had soon reason to rue his treacherous correspondence with Bonaparte. He was shot through the temples in his splendid baldric, and the gallant Wellesley was made governor of Seringapatam. What was its immense booty to him? The reputation he had earned already for courage and forethought, for rapid perceptions, financial skill, administrative justice, and pacific policy, was a treasure far exceeding all the wealth of Mysore. He made war on Doondiah-Waugh, the robber-chieftain; but he rejected with horror the proposal of a native to slay him in his tent. He dispersed his followers, and generously provided for his son when the father was slain.

In 1801, Wellesley was raised to the rank of major-general, just as Pitt resigned, and Addington came in to conclude the Treaty of Amiens. But the blessings of peace did not extend to India. General Wellesley engaged in "wild Mahratta battle," and at Assaye he

* Hugh Miller's Essays. "Wellington," p. 57.

defeated 50,000 men, well flanked by villages and rivers, and covered by 128 pieces of artillery. His little band consisted of 1,500 Europeans and less than 6,500 natives, with only seventeen guns. He had two horses killed under him ; but his victory was complete, though achieved under a murderous fire. The purpose of the war was accomplished. The Mahrattas were driven from the Deccan. Wellesley was made Knight of the Order of the Bath, and Lord Morpington was raised to the peerage by the title of Marquis Wellesley. In 1805, the young general returned home. His fame in India already rivalled that of Clive, and the victories of Assaye and Agram shone beside Arcot and Plassy* on the page of history. It is with his civil career that I am principally concerned, but I must not on that account leave the tale of his exploits quite untold.

In April, 1806, Sir Arthur Wellesley took his seat in the House of Commons as member for Rye. Lord Grenville and Fox, with "All the Talents," were then in power. They did not expect support from Sir Arthur, for they knew him to be a Tory ; but they wished him to have the means of defending publicly his brother's Indian administration. By the following April a change had come over the scene of English politics. Fox was no more. The King, affrighted by Lord Howick's very just and moderate Roman Catholic Army, and Navy Service Bill, had dismissed the Grenville Cabinet, and the Duke of

* Chatham, Grenville, and Rockingham, vol. i. p. 194.

Portland came to the rescue. One of his first acts was to attach Sir Arthur Wellesley to the ministry as Chief Secretary for Ireland. In this post he managed without disguise the "political influences." He jobbed like his predecessors, but with this difference—they did it in the dark, he in the daylight. You could almost see him holding the balance. Votes in the Lords or Commons were in one scale; places, pensions, promotions, bounties, deaneries, bishoprics were in the other. Every service to the government had its price, and few were they among its opponents who could not be bought over.* Sir Arthur traded on the venality which he despised, and defended in private conversation, as necessary for the stability of government, a system built on the ruins of honesty and honour.†

He made some attempts to check the violence of Protestant yeomanry; but his efforts to conciliate warring parties were not likely to have much weight while his opinions were known to be what they were at that period of his life. He advocated the tithe system, without regard to the injustice of exacting it from persons not of the established religion; and he did not yet see the necessity or expediency of placing Irish Catholics and Protestants on the same political footing. His secretaryship was interrupted by one military episode. He was attached, as general of division, to the corps sent by the British Government to demand the cession of the Danish fleet.

* Gleig's "Life of Wellington," p. 70.

† Ibid., pp. 70—72.

He carried out Mr. Canning's design (of which I have spoken in a former number *) with his usual celerity, and returned to London in September, 1807, to be welcomed by Lady Catharine, whom he had married in the previous year, and to embrace the son and heir to whom she had given birth in his absence.

Pitt had predicted, in 1805, that there would be another coalition against Bonaparte, and that Spain would take the lead in it. Sir Arthur Wellesley was dining with him at Walmer Castle when he said this, and explained his view to the guests who were present. Sir Arthur also, as it happened, was afterwards the chief agent in the fulfilment of Pitt's prophecy. He looked on the occupation of Portugal as a matter of great importance, and as affording to Great Britain the best possible field for resistance to Napoleon's aggressions. Thither he was sent in 1808, but not in the high position he ought to have held. He was seventh and last in the list of generals of division; and he was superseded in command by Sir Harry Burrard at the very moment when his operations against Junot were most successful. He therefore abstained from signing the Convention of Cintra,† by which Junot was permitted to evacuate Portugal with 22,000 men.

His superiority to the other generals, however, was now manifest, and the whole English army in Portugal was

* Liverpool and Canning, p. 161.

† Letter to Lord Castlereagh, Aug. 23, 1808.

placed under his orders. He resigned his seat in parliament and the Secretaryship of Ireland, and prepared to encounter Soult as he had faced Junot. But first he measured his strength with Victor and King Joseph, and earned by the battle of Talavera (which the Emperor described as "a terrible defeat") the title of Viscount Wellington and a place in the peerage. But the French retreated from the action in good order; and the approach of Soult, Ney, and Mortier made it necessary for Lord Wellington to recross the Tagus. No valour and no generalship could, with so limited a force as his, make head against 90,000 veterans thirsting for revenge. Nothing was left but to defend Portugal and to cover the approaches to Lisbon. Intrenched between the triple lines of Torres Vedras, the Allies were inaccessible to the attacks of Massena; scarped hills, streams dammed, breastworks, batteries, abattis, and forts met him everywhere, and he therefore retired into Spain with his huge army wasted by famine.

Wellington meanwhile was covered with reproaches for delay, which few could understand, but which was in itself victory. Lord Liverpool feebly supported him at home;* the Opposition was clamorous for his recall; the Spanish and Portuguese governments thwarted him at every turn, and his iron will only enabled him to risk nothing during the winter of 1810. He *knew* what Brougham and Jeffrey, with the whole staff of the *Edin-*

* Gleig's "Life of Wellington," p. 158.

burgh Review, would not perceive, that Spain and Portugal had defensible lines, which a weaker force might defend for ever against a stronger, if duly provisioned and supplied with munitions of war.* This was the simple but great idea which formed the basis of his operations and led ultimately to such brilliant results.

In the spring of 1811 he was again in the field, dealing, as ever, sure and rapid strokes. He stormed the fortress of Ciudad Rodrigo and captured Badajos in the early part of 1812. The last exploit was achieved with prodigies of valour. The English columns appeared at a distance to be "in the midst of a volcano," fighting onward through "showers of living flame." It was a type of Wellington's career in the Peninsula; for he was matched with some of the bravest and most skilful generals that ever served in Europe.

He had waited long and patiently for the moment when he might assail the strongholds just mentioned. It was ever the character of his mind to have a fixed end in view, to make everything subserve it, and never to be turned aside from it by the promise of incidental advantage. Thus the honours he never grasped at came thick upon him in the issue. Spain hailed him as the Duke of Ciudad Rodrigo; Portugal created him Marquis of Torres Vedras; and England raised him to the Earldom of Wellington. All through his campaigns he was unconsciously working his way to the premiership. While Napoleon

* Hugh Miller's "Essays," p. 52-3.

had in every expedition the resources of a great empire at his command, Wellington's military chest was empty, and he was compelled to create a paper currency in Portugal without any chance of its being available in Spain.

The battle of Salamanca was fought in July, 1812. It established Wellington's fame as a tactician; destroyed or scattered more than half of Marmont's army, separated the French force in Spain from that of Portugal, put a stop to the negotiations between King Joseph and the Cortes; and virtually "settled the question of the occupation of the Peninsula by Bonaparte's armies." * In one point only Wellington seems to have been remiss—he allowed Joseph to escape across the Tagus, though he might certainly have made him a prisoner of war.† Madrid was now open to the conqueror. Whigs and Tories at home united in praising his strategy. The Spaniards made him Generalissimo, and in the British peerage he ranked as Marquis. But the junction of King Joseph with Suchet and Soult compelled him to abandon the siege of Burgos, to fall back again upon Portugal, and to await reinforcements there in winter quarters.

The summer of 1813 saw him once more in Spain, carrying his army in less than two months over 200 leagues of difficult ground, crossing six great rivers, winning the battle of Vittoria, investing two fortresses, and clearing Spain of 120,000 French soldiers. Pampe-

* M. Thebandeau, quoted by Rev. G. R. Gleig.

† Gleig's "Life," p. 206.

luna was blockaded and fell; San Sebastian fell; and through the passes of the Pyrenees, in deadly conflict with Soult and his legions at every turn, Wellington forced his way into France, and cantoned his men and horses in the plateau of Biarritz. Then, pushing forward, he effected in sixteen days the passage of five great rivers; he fought the battle of Orthes, driving Soult from his strong position; he invested St. Jean Pied-de-Port, seized several magazines, and laid siege to Bayonne, one of the bulwarks of France. But he refused to unfurl the white flag of the Bourbons, or to proclaim Louis XVIII., till the allied sovereigns should cease to regard Napoleon as the ruler of the French people.

In April, 1814, he defeated Soult in the hard-fought battle of Toulouse, and was welcomed by the inhabitants of that city as a deliverer. They lifted him from his horse, bore him on their shoulders to the court-house, and rent the air with shouts of "Vive le Roi! Vive Wellington!" The news arrived shortly of Napoleon's abdication, and Soult, with the other generals, gave in their adhesion to the restored dynasty. The superiority of Wellington's tactics over those of all the other leaders of the allied armies was universally admitted; and his kind and generous conduct towards the people whom he subdued was extolled as highly as his political sagacity and his military genius.

One victory more awaited him—one achievement which was to decide the fate of Europe, and place his name above Napoleon's in the annals of war. But already he

was the idol of a grateful people. After a short time spent in Paris with the allied sovereigns, and in Madrid, where he vainly endeavoured to restrain the reactionary measures of King Ferdinand, he arrived in London after an absence of five years, was greeted as a duke, and enriched with half a million of money. In six weeks he was again in Paris as British Ambassador. He saw with sorrow the growing unpopularity of the Bourbons, and tried to avert it, as he had tried to dissuade Ferdinand from his despotic course. On the 7th of March, 1815, he was apprised of Napoleon's landing at Fréjus.

How he took the command of the allied armies in Flanders; how he and many of his staff lingered in the brilliant saloons of the Duchess of Richmond in Brussels till past midnight on the 15th of June; how he slept in the village of Waterloo on the night of the 17th; how in the morning he saw 71,947 French troops spread over the heights facing his own, 15,765 of them superb cavalry, and supported by 249 guns; how he stood without the smallest visible emotion before the greatest general of modern times, himself excepted; how he met the shock of his columns with an army of "young gentlemen"—"the worst army he ever commanded;"* how he made hosts long accustomed to victory recoil before raw battalions, foreigners, and militia; how the last attack of the French had been delivered even before the Prussians arrived, and how their arrival turned defeat into rout;—are events

* Gleig's "Life," p. 318; *Dublin Review*, Jan. 1865, p. 149.

which, however well known, never fail to rekindle the enthusiasm of all who are reminded of them.

In the political arrangements which followed the victory, Wellington's mediation was actively engaged on the side of mercy and moderation. He could not be brought to countenance any extreme measures, and he became an object of hatred alike to Royalists and Republicans, as he had long been to the adherents of Bonaparte. Several attempts were made on his life; one of which was by an assassin named Cantillon. He was brought to trial and acquitted, though the evidence against him was of the strongest kind. Louis Philippe afterwards made him his gamekeeper. Napoleon I. bequeathed him 10,000 francs; and Napoleon III. paid the legacy to his representatives, with the interest which had been accruing during twenty-five years.

Wellington's military life ended with Waterloo. Though Commander-in-chief of the British army in after life, he never again went forth to battle. In October, 1818, he became Master-General of the Ordnance, with a seat in the cabinet; and he strongly supported Lord Liverpool and Lord Sidmouth, then Secretary of State, in passing and carrying into effect the Six Acts intended to counteract the agitation of reformers. The chief of these reformers were William Cobbett, Major Cartwright, Henry Hunt, Sir Francis Burdett, Lord Cochrane, Gale Jones, Thistlewood, and the Watsons.*

* See the "Spafield Riots," *All the Year Round*, December, 1866; Sir H. Bulwer, "Cobbett," Part II. § vii.

The exposure of the Cato-street conspiracy brought some accession of strength to the government; but the proceedings against the Queen by the Attorney-General were almost universally unpopular. The Duke stood apart from them to the best of his power, but, as a member of a cabinet subservient to the King, he could not but incur some share of odium. He was opposed also to the disfranchisement of small boroughs, even when they were convicted of bribery; and he resisted the first efforts for throwing open the trade with India and China.

When Canning was introduced into the cabinet on the death of Lord Londonderry (Castlereagh), Wellington waved his personal objection to that minister, in order to strengthen Lord Liverpool's hands. Canning's inconsistencies often puzzled his friends, and the Duke, with many others, thought him an enigma. But when he quitted England to take part in the Congress of Vienna (which was afterwards transferred to Verona), he received from Mr. Canning the same instructions which had been prepared by Lord Londonderry, and he ultimately withdrew from the conferences. Indeed, the Duke of Wellington, though opposed to democratic tendencies in this country, leaned in his foreign relations to the popular side, for the simple reason that our constitution, which he represented, is founded upon mixed principles, intended mutually to support and limit one another. It had been proposed in the previous year that the Duke should go to Ireland as Lord-Lieutenant; but this dignity he declined, because

he had not made up his mind as to the course that he should adopt finally on Catholic Emancipation.

When Mr. Canning, in the same year (April 30, 1821), brought forward a bill for allowing Roman Catholic peers to sit in the House of Lords, the Duke took no part in the debate. He was slow in arriving at a conviction which in the end proved strong and triumphant. Besides this, he and all the rest of the ministers were obliged to put considerable restraint on themselves, and to avoid the expression of opinions too decidedly one way or another. It was necessary for the Liverpool cabinet to present a compact front to the eye of the public, while its members in reality regarded each other with mutual distrust. Canning, Huskisson, and Robinson were for advancing liberalism abroad; but Eldon, Westmoreland, Bathurst, and, it may be, Peel at that time, sympathised with the allied sovereigns, and dreaded a rupture with them. *They* had no quixotic notions about giving constitutions to foreign kingdoms, and in this the Grenvillite part of the government agreed with them, as did the Duke of Wellington to a certain extent. He distrusted Canning more and more, and thought his famous speech about "calling the New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old" was mere fanfare, since he had resolved to recognise the independence of the Spanish-American colonies whether France invaded Spain or not.

It was in 1823 that Daniel O'Connell and Shiel met among the Wicklow mountains and resolved to accom-

plish, if possible, the liberation of Ireland. They established the Catholic Association; collected penny subscriptions as rent from every Irishman; eluded the "Algerine Bill" (as the Bill of Suppression directed against the Association in 1825* was called); took a census of Catholics and Orangemen; supported ejected tenants who dared to vote against their powerful landlords; made known the proceedings of the Association by the *Weekly Register*; and braved the assaults of the Kildare-street Society and the Brunswick Clubs; procured the election of O'Connell as member of parliament in 1828; and at last derived aid from the liberal Protestants who formed the Society of "Friends of Civil and Religious Liberty."

While this long agitation was going forward in Ireland, and calling off the minds of the combatants on both sides from the social and industrial wants and miseries of the country, the Duke of Wellington was negotiating with the Czar at St. Petersburg, and deterring him from his designs on Turkey soon after his accession to the throne. The policy which England adopted at that period was the same as that for which we have fought and pleaded in the field and the cabinet ever since,—viz., the protection and independence of Greece from the tyranny of the Porte, and the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire as a barrier against Russian aggrandisement. The upright character and remarkable truthfulness of

* It received the Royal assent on March 9, 1825.

the Duke made him an invaluable mediator in such affairs. The Emperor Nicholas respected him as much as did George IV., and gave him the most substantial marks of his affection and esteem. The speech which Wellington delivered in 1826, on the occasion of British troops being sent to Portugal to defend the Queen and the new constitution, differed widely in tone from that of Canning. He avoided the defiant bearing of his more enthusiastic colleague, and confined himself to statements more becoming the gravity of the War Office.

When Canning became premier in 1827, he resigned his place in the cabinet, and even his command-in-chief of the army. He could serve, he said, *with* a colleague whom he did not fully trust, but he could not serve *under* him. The attempt made by Canning to facilitate the importation of foreign corn was frustrated by an amendment moved by Wellington; and after Lord Goderich had been First Lord of the Treasury for a few months subsequent to Canning's decease, the Duke was requested by the King to form what Lord Goderich could not form—an efficient ministry.

Frederick John Robinson was born on the 1st of November, 1782, and after having filled various high official appointments, was created Viscount Goderich, April 28, 1827. In spite of his lordly title, he continued to be best known by the sobriquet which clung to him to the last. Of all the nicknames fastened on statesmen, none has been more successful than that of

"Prosperity Robinson," which was given to the unlucky Chancellor of the Exchequer, who enlarged on the prosperous state of the country only a short time before the financial crisis of 1825, when fifty banks closed their doors, and more than two hundred merchants became insolvent. Having been Secretary of State for the Colonies and Lord Privy Seal, he was advanced to the earldom of Ripon on the 13th of April, 1833. His son, the second Earl of Ripon, is now Earl de Grey. He had been one of Canning's colleagues, and it was hoped that he might be able to keep the party together, at the period of which I am writing. Having supported the Catholic claims, he could at all events represent the ideas of the Canningites in regard to Emancipation.

But Goderich had one defect, and that a very grave one. He wanted decision, and consequently no one had confidence in him. Lord Malmesbury spoke of him in his youth as, "Frederick Robinson, doubtful, but with no good reason."* In the thunderstorm which O'Connell was raising, a premier like Lord Goderich would soon have steered the vessel of State on a rock. No reliance was to be placed on his firmness, his capacity, or his judgment. It was during his administration that the great leader of public opinion in Ireland convoked a simultaneous meeting of all the Catholics in the island. It was done at Shiel's suggestion; and it was enough to make stronger hands than those of Lord Goderich shake.

* "Diaries and Correspondence," vol. iv. p. 380.

Lord Palmerston in his autobiography relates an amusing anecdote in reference to Lord Goderich and his brief administration. He was sitting in Council with the other members of the cabinet, on a day in August, 1827, when Lord Anglesey, just returned from the country, entered and said, "Well, gentlemen, I have done what you sent me to do. I have brought you the Duke of Wellington's acceptance as Commander-in-Chief; and by ——, mark my words, as sure as you are alive he will trip up all your heels before six months are over your heads." "Before the six months were well over," adds Lord Palmerston, "the Duke was in, and our heels were up; but the King was the great plotter, and Holmes and Planta worked upon Goderich, and persuaded him he could never overcome the difficulties he would have to encounter."*

Never did a man rise to the height of civil and military power by more unexceptionable means than the Duke of Wellington. He had been always rising; but he never seemed to be scheming for his own advancement. His elevation was due to force of character, and to it alone. He was now at the head of the cabinet, with Peel for leader in the Lower House. It was called the Wellington-Peel cabinet, and was thus composed:—

First Lord of the Treasury, the Duke of Wellington;
Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Goulburn;

* Sir H. L. Bulwer's "Life of Palmerston," vol. i. p. 212.

Lord Chancellor, Lord Lyndhurst ;
President of the Council, Earl Bathurst ;
Lord Privy Seal, Lord Ellenborough ;
Foreign Secretary, Lord Dudley and Ward ;
Colonial Secretary, Mr. Huskisson ;
Home Secretary, Mr. Peel ;
Master of the Mint, Mr. Herries ;
President of the India Board, Lord Melville ;
President of the Board of Trade, Mr. Grant ;
Secretary at War, Lord Palmerston.

The Tory phalanx was considerably broken by Lord Lyndhurst being seated on the Woolsack instead of Lord Eldon. The Canningites, however, whom the Duke had invited to remain in office, soon fell off from him, in consequence of a "misunderstanding" between Mr. Huskisson and himself. Though he was Colonial Secretary, that gentleman had voted against the government for the disfranchisement of the corrupt borough of East Retford. In writing to the Duke to explain his conduct, he alluded to his readiness to resign. He did not mean, however, to be taken at his word, and was sorely piqued when the Duke, who disliked his free-trade principles, wrote to him to say that his letter had been laid before the King, or in other words, that his resignation was accepted. In vain Mr. Huskisson protested that it was all a mistake. The Duke was inflexible. "It was not a mistake," he said ; "it is not a mistake, and it shall not be a mistake."

Lord Dudley, Lord Palmerston, and Mr. Grant then sent in their resignations, and their places were supplied by the Earl of Aberdeen, Sir Henry Hardinge, Sir George Murray, and Mr. Vesey Fitzgerald.

The succession of the last of these gentlemen to Mr. Grant at the Board of Trade was one of those apparently insignificant events which lead on to results of the greatest magnitude. Mr. Vesey Fitzgerald's acceptance of office obliged him to vacate his seat for Clare; O'Connell's election for that place resulted in Catholic Emancipation; Emancipation led to the Reform Bill; and the Reform Bill has revolutionised England.

The Test and Corporation Acts were repealed, and persons holding offices under the Crown were no longer forced to qualify themselves by receiving the Lord's Supper according to the rights of the Established Church. During the debate on this question, the Duke of Wellington seems to have spoken on the Catholic claims with studied ambiguity; and Mr. Gleig terms it "the nearest approach to what may be called a statement with mental reservation which is anywhere to be found throughout his voluminous sayings." After declaring that his opinions on the subject were as decided as those of any one in the House, he added, that *until he should see a great change in the question*, he should oppose repeal of the laws affecting the political position of Roman Catholics.

That change had already begun, and every week ripened it. Sir Francis Burdett carried his motion for a

conference of both Houses on the matter; the laws against public assemblies in Ireland proved a total failure; O'Connell was elected for Clare; the magistrates were intimidated. Outrage, indeed, and violence there were none, but the whole Catholic population was perfectly organised and obedient to the voice of its leader. It was vain to think of disfranchising the forty-shilling freeholders except Emancipation were granted, or of suspending the Habeas Corpus Act and proclaiming martial law. It was vain to propose a bill requiring candidates to take the oath of allegiance and supremacy on the hustings. There was no chance of the House of Commons approving such absolute measures, or consenting to any large number of members, elected like O'Connell, being prevented from taking their seats and representing their constituents. Expediency had become arbitress of the situation, and dictated what justice had pleaded for in vain.

Securities were asked of those whom it was proposed to relieve, and these they were ready to give. The bishops had expressed their willingness that the clergy should be paid by the State, nor would they refuse to pledge themselves not to use their influence for the overthrow of the Established Church. O'Connell had in 1825 consented to the disfranchisement of the forty-shilling freeholders; and though he subsequently resisted it, the qualification was in the issue raised to ten pounds.* The payment of £300,000 a year to the Catholic clergy

* Flanagan, p. 884.

was contemplated by the Duke, together with licenses from the Crown; but these conditions were afterwards rescinded, as liable to objection from both sides. Mr. Peel, indeed, could not be induced to assent to them, nor was he without much difficulty persuaded to endorse the Duke's scheme of Emancipation at all.

The repeal was preluded in February, 1829, by a faint show of authority on the part of the government. It passed a bill for the suppression of the Catholic Association, and then on the 3rd of March gave notice of the astounding measure for the relief of Roman Catholics. But at the eleventh hour the King took fright. He was appalled at the lengths that he had gone, and the coronation oath, which used to haunt his father like a spectre, rose before him with its wonted terrors. He would not consent. The Duke remonstrated. He must explain the nature of the obstacle to parliament. The King replied that his ministers could pursue no other course. So saying, he bade Wellington and Peel farewell, and kissed each of them on both cheeks. They retired, believing themselves to be out of office; but a letter from the King sent to Apsley House soon requested them to retain their places. George IV. then had a meeting with Lord Eldon. "He told Eldon what was not true about his interview with the new Catholic converts, entirely misled the old ex-Chancellor, cried, whimpered, fell on his neck, and kissed him too."*

* Thackeray's "Four Georges," Lect. iv.

The bill was brought in. The great Duke fell in a day from the height of his popularity. Peel was stigmatised as a traitor. The Earl of Winchelsea attacked the Duke of Wellington violently in the *Standard*; imputed to him the intention of introducing popery into every department of the State; and having refused to make an apology, was challenged by the premier, who met him in Battersea Fields. Both fired, but neither of them aimed at his adversary. Indeed, the ruffian who could have shot the hero of Assaye, Talavera, and Waterloo would have deserved a hundred deaths. The required apology was given, and the affair ended. Emancipation passed into law in the midst of a deafening storm. Ireland was tranquillised for the moment. O'Connell took his seat in the House; and a new era in English history began.

The year 1830 was a remarkable period of political agitation. Many of the thrones on the Continent were shaken, and revolution spread like an epidemic. Charles the Tenth's attempted *coup d'état* in July resulted in his expulsion, and the appointment of a provisional government, which the British Cabinet immediately recognised. The Duke of Wellington, however, disapproved the rising in Belgium, and abstained from acknowledging the independence of that country. Poland, Germany, and Italy were all in flames, and the public mind in England was greatly excited in favour of Reform. Close boroughs were more and more in disrepute, and though the Duke regarded them as a part of the Constitution and a great

bulwark of the aristocracy and the Crown, he had a strong feeling against their being brought into the market. Whenever he was pressed to purchase a borough, he replied, "I would not dirty my fingers with so vile a job." The government suffered repeated checks through the growing power of Earl Grey and the Whigs. A prosecution which the Attorney-General conducted against the editor of the *Morning Journal* for libel was highly unpopular; and a Forgery Bill of Mr. Peel's was amended in parliament by the abolition of the penalty of death for the offence in question. Numerous riots broke out, threshing-machines were destroyed by mobs, haystacks were fired in the southern counties, and Cobbett's *Weekly Register* fanned the incendiary's flames.* Ireland was convulsed with a cry for Repeal, and the Birmingham Political Union, with all its branches, followed the example which had been set so successfully by the Catholic Association under the guidance of O'Connell.

The Duke was in no degree inclined to yield to the clamour for Reform. He could no more bring himself to countenance the disfranchisement of boroughs by wholesale, than to vote for new lines of railway after Mr. Huskisson's death on the Manchester and Liverpool line, or to travel by rail so long as post-horses could be found for his carriages along the deserted roads between London and Walmer Castle. So strongly was he wedded to the ideas of his youth, that he excited a great deal of

* Sir H. L. Bulwer's "Cobbett." Part iii. 6.

odium by declaring, in rather a defiant tone, that as long as he held place in the cabinet he should resist any Reform measures which might be proposed. Even his excellent plan for the establishment of a metropolitan police was a ground of complaint; and when the King's intended visit to the Mansion House in November was abandoned through fear of an outbreak, the blame of the whole business was laid on the Duke. In the same month the government was beaten on the Civil List. Whigs, Tories, and Radicals combined against them, and on the 16th they retired from office. Mr. Peel had still a brilliant career before him, but the Duke of Wellington never returned to his former power. The rest of his political life ranges over a space occupied by other premiers more pliant to the pressure of the times. Yet his influence continued to be great, and he rose in public esteem by ceasing to direct public affairs. His rule in the cabinet was thought to resemble too nearly the rule of a general in the field.

His forebodings were gloomy, and he looked on the triumph of democracy as all but certain. Earl Grey succeeded him as premier;* and in March, 1831, the Reform Bill introduced by Lord John Russell proposed the disfranchisement of sixty decayed boroughs, and the reduction of forty-seven others to a single member each. The alarm which this sweeping measure produced in some minds was equalled by the wild joy with which it was

* November 18, 1830.

hailed by the populace. It passed the second reading in the Commons by a majority of one, and the ministers, ill-assured of success, decided on a dissolution. Apsley House was assailed by a mob, and its windows were broken while the Duchess of Wellington was lying dead within the walls.

In the new parliament, the party favourable to the ministry was immense, and the Reform Bill was passed in the Lower House by a majority of 109 on the 21st of September. The Lords, however, rejected it. Apsley House was again attacked by crowds of ruffians, in spite of its iron shutters, and a plot was laid against the Duke's life at Deal. Many talked of "De Witting" this illustrious servant of his country. They might talk and menace as they would, nothing deterred him from pursuing what he believed to be the path of duty. He looked on the Reform Bill as a great evil, and he took the lead in opposing it. To us, of course, nothing seems so much to be deprecated as the Elizabethan Constitution in Church and State; and the Reform Bill, to the Catholic members of parliament in 1832, appeared the legitimate consequence of the Emancipation of 1829. It is strange that the Duke of Wellington, with his keen penetration, did not see that the measure which he had passed was parent of that which he resisted. Pitt, in his earlier days, was more logical, for he advocated both Emancipation and Reform. In his inner mind he sat loose to the Church of England, as did Fox.

It was not so with the Duke. He dreaded any change in the State which tended to disestablish the Church. He made, indeed, no parade of religion, but Mr. Gleig, who knew him well, says that at Walmer, where his bedroom served him as a sitting-room also, there was a book-case within his reach while in bed, and that the Bible, the Prayer-Book, Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Living and Dying," and Cæsar's "Commentaries," which lay near him while thus reclining, appeared, from the marks of use upon them, to have been much read and often consulted. The Duke was strongly urged by Lord Wharncliffe to make some compromise with the ministers of the Crown when they introduced their Reform scheme a third time, in December, 1831. He always insisted, in reply, on the necessity of first putting down the Political Unions, but he never evinced unwillingness to make some concessions. He even supported the ministry in their Irish Tithe Commutation Act, believing that it would put the Protestant clergy on a better footing with the peasantry, and thus compensate to them for some pecuniary loss. In the same spirit he voted, at a later period, for the suppression of ten Irish bishoprics.

The Reform Bill, passed by the Commons, was read a second time in the Lords before the Easter holidays. The majority for this reading was only nine, and it was understood that peers would be created expressly to insure its not being mutilated in committee. In the very first division the ministers were in a minority of twenty-nine.

They immediately besought the King to create the requisite number of peers. William IV. refused, and Earl Grey having resigned, the Duke strove hard during a fortnight to form a cabinet on the basis of a moderate Reform Bill. Peel declined joining him: disappointment met him everywhere. Even Sir Robert Inglis stood aloof, and with Lord Lyndhurst alone and a few subalterns nothing could be done. A letter from Birmingham announced to the Duke that five hundred men had sworn *he* should never be the premier; or that, if premier, he should not be so long. Baffled in all his efforts, he threw up the task assigned him. He and Lord Lyndhurst explained to the Lords that they should abstain from voting, and they then quitted the House. The bill passed on the 4th of June, and on the 18th the Duke barely escaped being murdered by a furious mob, when riding through the city attended by a single groom. Happily, our people was spared the indelible infamy of harming the man—

“Whose life was work, whose language rife
With rugged maxims hewn from life;
Who never spoke against a foe;
Whose eighty winters freeze with one rebuke
All great self-seekers trampling on the right.”*

With all thinking people the Duke soon recovered his popularity and influence. Passers-by began again to salute him respectfully in the streets; the country folk made way for him in the fields, and opened the gates

* “Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington,” by the Poet-Laureate.

when he followed the fox-hounds at Strathfieldsaye ; and he himself remarked with a laugh, that he was "getting up in the market."

Many dissensions arose in the Whig cabinet after the triumph of the Reform Bill. The ministry was too strong, and it presumed on its strength. Ireland especially proved to them a rock of offence. It is the *crux* of every cabinet, and time does not lessen its crucial character. Mr. Stanley (afterwards Lord Derby), Sir James Graham, the Earl of Ripon, and the Duke of Richmond resigned, because they disagreed with their colleagues on the Appropriation Clause in the Irish Church Temporalities Bill. They denounced as confiscation the diversion of any ecclesiastical property to secular purposes. Lord Althorp was opposed at heart to the Irish Coercion Bill, which he was called upon to introduce ; he broke down in opening his case ; and when, through O'Connell's betrayal of Littleton's indiscreet confidence, his repugnance to the measure became known, not to his colleagues only, but to all the world, he withdrew from office, and Lord Grey as prime minister gave place to Lord Melbourne. "He is the only man to be premier," Lord Durham (an advanced Radical) once said of him at a dinner-party during the Grey administration, "because he is the only one of whom none of us would be jealous."*

But he could please neither party. Conservatives were

* Sir H. L. Bulwer's "Life of Lord Palmerston," vol. ii. p. 203.

alarmed and indignant at the inroads which the Greys and Melbournes had made on the Constitution, and the Radicals out of doors were impatient at their moving so slowly in a democratic direction. Lord Melbourne proposed Lord John Russell to the King as Lord Althorp's successor in the House of Commons, when that statesman, on the death of his father, became Earl Spencer; but his Majesty, to the Premier's surprise, replied that he should consult the Duke of Wellington on that subject. The Duke was consulted in November, 1834, and his advice to William IV. was to despatch a messenger to Rome for Sir Robert Peel, and to direct him to form a cabinet.

In the meantime the Duke was sworn in as First Lord of the Treasury and Secretary of State for the Home Department, but only for a time. Sir Robert Peel soon arrived, and became prime minister on the 9th of December. In a letter to the electors of Tamworth he endeavoured to conciliate all moderate men, but the policy which he avowed towards Ireland was unjust, and O'Connell opposed him with all his might. The Duke was made Foreign Secretary, to the Whigs' discontent, and Sir Robert contrived to hold his own till the end of March, 1835, when Lord John Russell defeated him on a most equitable motion for applying to purposes of general education the surplus temporalities of the Church of Ireland not needed for the spiritual care of its members. The obstinacy with which our governments, both Whig

and Tory, resist year after year every proposition for distributing justice in ecclesiastical matters in the sister isle is without parallel in civilised nations freely represented in parliament.* Lord Palmerston had predicted that the Peel-Wellington ministry could not stand,† though the ability of its chief was unquestionable. He was right also in saying that Sir James Graham and Mr. Stanley could not unite with them then, though it was highly probable that they would do so eventually.

Sir Robert Peel resigned, and the Duke ceased for ever to take charge of any great civil department. His advice was always considered of weight, and he was consulted in every emergency. Accustomed as he was to toil, he must have found retirement irksome, particularly as "his home was never a sunny one." He was a lone man, and had been so to a great extent even during the lifetime of the Duchess. They had little in common, and lived together half-alienated, through want of congenial dispositions rather than through fault on either side. In June, 1834, he was installed as Chancellor of the University of Oxford, and during the ministry of Lord Melbourne for the second time he continued to be Warden of the Cinque Ports, and Lord-lieutenant of the county of Hampshire. In all these offices he paid the most punctilious attention to business, and to her present Majesty he was bound by ties of the most devoted loyalty, affection, and esteem. He welcomed Mar-

* Written in 1867.

† Letter to the Hon. Wm. Temple, November 25, 1834.

shal Soult to Apsley House with noble urbanity, and lived in private on friendly terms with Lord Melbourne himself.

That nobleman's tenure of power ended in 1841, and the Duke again accepted a seat in the cabinet under Sir Robert Peel, but without taking charge of any special department. His command-in-chief of the army was secured to him by patent during his life. His daily attendance at the Horse Guards and attention to all the details of his high office were exemplary. He answered all letters addressed to him on whatever subject, and was punctually present during the debates in the Lords, arriving generally in time for prayers.

The year 1842 is sadly memorable in the annals of British India. It was that in which the disasters, which Lady Sale's "Journal" have made too well known, happened to the force left by Sir Robert Sale at Cabul. We had restored Shah Shujah to his throne because Dost Mahommed was suspected of favouring schemes of Russian aggrandisement. But Afghan treachery continues unchanged from age to age, and the garrison of Cabul proved its victims. Rejecting the bold counsels of Lady Sale, the officers trusted the false promises of Afghan chiefs, allies of Mahommed, and the entire army, consisting of about 4,500 fighting men, with their wives and families and 12,000 camp followers, perished in the Khoord Cabul Pass, with the exception of Lady Sale and a few others, who consented to remain prisoners under the protection of Akbar Khan. It was the Duke of

Wellington's opinion that this disaster would never have happened if Lady Sale had been the commander.* The restoration of Shah Shujah was annulled, and the lion-like Dost Mahommed reigned in his stead.

It was with the Duke's assent, though not with his approval, that Sir Robert Peel abolished the Corn Laws. To the last he leaned to Protection, but believing Sir Robert to be the only man then capable of governing the country with advantage, he sacrificed his own views on the question. It was the third of those terrific measures, each of which was to have been the deathblow to England's greatness, yet which she has managed to survive,—Emancipation, Reform, and Free Trade in Corn. Each of them was a noble achievement, which no one now would dream of undoing; but of this we may be sure, that England has yet her highest greatness to attain in accomplishing the redemption of Ireland, if indeed it be not already too late to regain the long-alienated affections of the people.†

The Duke of Wellington was ever kind in heart towards his country, and Peel's anxiety for the repeal of the Corn Laws was increased by the sufferings of her people during the potato famine. The permanent endowment of Maynooth in 1845 was kindly intended, and so were the efforts lately made ‡ for securing to tenants compensation for improvements they may have made on the land. But as

* Mrs. Crossland's *Memorable Women*: "Lady Sale," p. 381.

† Written in 1867.

‡ March, 1867.

great a man as Wellington is needed to rid them of the monstrous anomaly which secures the domination of Protestant over Catholic, Saxon over Celt, landlord over tenant, and the few over the many. When Sir Robert Peel had been thrown out of office in 1846 by the united forces of Whigs and Tories, the Duke retired with him, and never took any prominent part again in the debates of the House of Lords, except on military affairs.

I have spoken already of his regard for the religion in which he had been brought up, and of which he always spoke in a serious tone, as if he were on sacred ground. But there is one anecdote more which deserves to be told. He went to church regularly at Strathfieldsaye and Walmer, and received the sacrament whenever it was administered. But he took care that his guests should go to church also. When an Irish gentleman in the Austrian service, Count Nugent, was staying with him, and told him one Sunday morning that he could not attend the parish church because he was a Catholic, the Duke turned to Captain Watts, an old Peninsular officer, and desired him to show the Count the way to the Roman Catholic chapel. Then walking off himself with some Protestant friends, he said, not a little amused, "I knew he did not want me to go to church, nor to go himself either; but *I thought it best we should both go.*" The story may not be quite correct; for a friend of Count Nugent informs me that he was very regular in his religious duties, and by no means likely "not to want to go to church;" but

we may say of it, as of so many other good stories, *se non è vero, è ben trovato*.

It is pleasant to think that the Duke "was neither the careless nor the profligate man which the world represented him." He rebuked a young officer in India once, who was making a jest of the Christian religion, by saying, "No more of that. Read Paley's Evidences; and if they do not convince you on the first reading, read them again, and say no more on the subject." * There are few public men of whom so many interesting anecdotes are told, but they are most of them familiar to my readers, and would be hardly in keeping with the purpose of these sketches. He was temperate in the use of food and wine, and slept on a hair mattress on a simple camp-bedstead.† The estimate which he formed of himself was modest, and as Fox ascribed his own skill as a debater to his being "very painstaking," so the Duke wrote in his journal—"I am not of great ability. I am a painstaking person, without any of that astounding power of mind."

In similar terms Washington, when appointed General-in-chief, wrote to his wife of his "consciousness of its being a trust too great for his capacity."‡ Wellington's imagination, in fact, was meagre, nor was his intellect cast in a literary mould. Yet, like Washington and Cromwell,

* From private information.

† English Cyclopædia. Art. "Wellington."

‡ "Writings," vol. iii. p. 2.

he excelled in "a gigantic common sense," rarer perhaps than genius itself, but which, in truth, constitutes genius of a peculiar and homely yet high order.* There is much in his character and career which reminds us of the first Earl Stanhope. He, too, was a general, and Commander-in-chief of the British army in Spain before he became premier. He, too, pursued a parliamentary as well as a military course. Of him it is said, as it might be said of Wellington, that "he carried into politics the same qualities which had raised him in the field."† He, like Wellington, was remarkable for honourable conduct, gallant bearing, victories won, and high diplomatic functions discharged on the Continent, plain dealing, generosity and frankness under all circumstances, and signal efforts for the relief of his Roman Catholic fellow-subjects.

The desires which the Duke expressed to his sons' tutor, the Rev. J. M. Wagner, of Brighton, respecting the way in which they should be brought up were very significant. He wished them to be educated "as Christian gentlemen, in all singleness and simplicity, every consideration being postponed to that of duty." To the last he retained his faculties in full vigour. The suppression of the Chartist outbreak in London in April, 1848, was due to his arrangements; and his health continued unimpaired till within a few hours of his decease. On the 14th of September, 1852, he died in the eighty-fourth

* Hugh Miller's *Essays*. "Wellington," p. 49.

† Earl Stanhope's "History," vol. i. p. 109.

year of his age. From Walmer Castle his body was conveyed to London, and his public funeral, on the 18th of November, was one of the most remarkable ever seen in this country.

“O good gray head which all men knew;
O voice from which their omens all men drew;
O iron nerve to true occasion true,—
O fall’n at length that tower of strength
Which stood four-square to all the winds that blew!” *

Such are Tennyson’s beautiful and powerful verses; and if any other eulogium on Wellington’s memory be required, it may be found in the speeches delivered in parliament on the occasion of his death by Lord Derby and Mr. Gladstone.†

* “Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington.”

† See McGilchrist’s “Life of Gladstone,” p. 72.

EARL GREY.

“He also had been busy seeing sights—
The parliament and all the other houses ;
Had sat beneath the gallery at nights,
To hear debates whose thunder *roused* (not *rouses*)
The world to gaze upon those northern lights,
Which flash'd as far as where the musk-bull browses ;
He had also stood at times behind the throne—
But Grey was not arrived, and Chatham gone.”

BYRON.

EARL GREY.

EXPERIENCE teaches us that the lives of men who succeed each other in unbroken lines are regarded with special interest by readers in general. A necklace is better than a bead; a chain of mountains is grander than a solitary height. The mind is gratified by continuity and by mutual dependence. History itself used to be little more than lives of the sovereigns of a country strung together; and now that it takes a wider range, and is concerned with the moral, intellectual, and social condition of the people under each reign, we have lives of the Lord Chancellors, the Viceroys of Ireland, the Archbishops of Canterbury and of York, lives of the Presidents of Republics, and lives of the Popes. Perhaps none of these personages have so near a relation to one another as prime ministers; and the advantage and pleasure of studying these as a line flows from the fact, which cannot but be apparent on close observation, that a premier has, especially in England, a wider and a more immediate influence on society, and on the acts and the policy of his successor, than could be predicated of emperors, kings,

queens, viceroys, lord chancellors, primates, presidents, or popes. The First Lord of the Treasury, indeed, is, for the time being, the most influential of all mental agents in the land, because his personal influence, or—which comes to the same thing—that of the Cabinet that he chooses, extends to all branches of the community, and leads to inevitable results, in one direction or another, in the premierships that are to follow. The lives of Wellington and Grey supply abundant illustrations of these remarks.

The veteran statesman who succeeded the Duke of Wellington as premier was cast in a very different political mould from that of his predecessor. Earl Grey had been from his youth the consistent advocate of peace rather than of war, of conciliation rather than of coercion, of religious comprehension rather than of exclusion, and of free elections rather than of corrupt boroughs. He was born in 1764, and was five years younger than William Pitt, and five years older than Wellington. His friend and leader, Fox, was his senior by fifteen years. To that chieftain he attached himself from the first, when he entered parliament in 1786 as member for Northumberland, his native county. He was then only twenty-two years of age, but in his maiden speech he made a startling impression on the House. Addington says he went through his performance with an *éclat* which had not been equalled within his recollection. Being already opposed to Pitt, he declaimed

against that minister's Commercial Treaty with France. He had better have reserved his censures for offences more deserving of them ; but at that time he as well as Fox, Sheridan, and even Burke, knew little of the true principles of commerce and finance.* Fox confessed to Charles Butler that he had never read the "Wealth of Nations,"† and Burke, through party spirit, opposed Pitt's measure for free trade with Ireland. Grey's speech, however, ranked him at once among the foremost debaters, and soon after he had delivered it he was intrusted with the charge relative to Cheyte Sing in the impeachment of Warren Hastings.

To trace, though but briefly, the events in his parliamentary career will be to mark the steps which led up to the Reform Bill of 1832. Earl Grey looked forward to the passing of such a measure as the end of his being, and never during a long life swerved from his design. Often, indeed, its accomplishment seemed almost hopeless, and the scaffold rose before him as the more probable reward of his toil. But through evil report and through good report he held on his course—a memorable example of wisdom, firmness, and moderation. It was beyond all human foresight that the statesman who most vigorously opposed the Reform Bill—the Duke of Wellington—should be also the very man who, by achieving Catholic Emancipation, made Reform possible and easy.

* Moore's "Life of Sheridan," vol. i. pp. 464-66.

† "Reminiscences," vol. i. p. 176.

Lord Grey's views were from the beginning very moderate. Though he became a member of the Society of the Friends of the People, he constantly urged the necessity of adhering to the British Constitution, of supporting the Throne loyally, of maintaining an hereditary peerage, and of avoiding any approach to the excesses of the French revolutionists. Again and again he declared that any despotism—that of Russia, Prussia, nay, even of Nero and Caligula—would be preferable to that of the French Convention. But he did hold most distinctly that with the monarchy and aristocracy of Great Britain, it would be wise to give as free scope to the popular element as might be consistent with the integrity of those estates. Hence he aimed not only at the disfranchisement of close boroughs, but at a large extension of the suffrage also.

A letter recently written by Lord Brougham* assures us, that Earl Grey, with himself and the other leaders of the Reform movement in 1829, wished to return to the ancient qualification for voting in this country, and make household suffrage the basis of an amended representation.† The minds of men, however, in 1832 were so much occupied with the expediency of getting rid of rotten boroughs that they almost forgot the collateral question of extended suffrage, and thus Lord Grey's

* February 27, 1867.

† This statement was contradicted by the present Lord Grey, and re-affirmed by Lord Brougham in the *Times* of March 15, 1867.

Reform Bill of that year left something to be accomplished by a future act.

Lord Grey's politics were the counterpart to those of Pitt during his war with the French republic, of Addington, of the Duke of Portland, and of Perceval. Year after year he strove to persuade the House that to avoid revolution we must meet it half way. If we would escape the catastrophes which befell regal governments abroad, we ought, he said, to refrain from provoking them by needless coercion. Mr. Pitt's suspension of the Habeas Corpus, his proclamations against meetings called seditious, his "constructive treason" and penalties on all free discussion, his state trials of Horne Tooke, Hardy, and Thelwall, were calculated to provoke the very evil they were intended to avert. The outbreaks of disaffection could be permanently prevented only by removing the causes of complaint. On the 25th of May, 1793, when an address was moved in support of a proclamation which the government had issued against seditious meetings, Grey assailed the prime minister smartly, and read the resolutions in favour of Reform which Pitt, with Cartwright and Horne Tooke,* had agreed to ten years before at the Thatched House Tavern. He resisted also a practice which was gaining ground among ministers, of refusing to produce papers and correspondence relative to treaties and hostilities with foreign powers. He fully admitted the prerogative of the Crown in conducting

* English Cyclopædia, Art. "Grey."

such negotiations, but repudiated as dangerous to the State undue confidence in responsible ministers.

His opinions about war were equally clear and decided. Self-defence was its only just cause. It might be undertaken to redeem a right forcibly withheld, to provide for future safety, to repel an unjust attack, or to aid an ally who was unjustly attacked. The principle which lay at the bottom of all these cases was self-defence, and he could approve of no war which did not fall under one of these heads. Hence, with Lord Grenville and Fox, Grey was averse to war with France in 1792 and the following year, unless injury were first offered to us, and in that case he would have prosecuted it with far more vigour than Pitt. But though he disapproved it, he voted liberally for supplies when once it was begun, as Burke had done in the case of the American war which he so loudly condemned.

During several years after the defeat of Grey's motion for Reform in 1797, he and Fox, to whom he was ardently attached, withdrew almost entirely from attendance in parliament. In after life Earl Grey regretted this step, which was caused by the apparent fruitlessness of his efforts and those of his colleagues to promote peace abroad and conciliation at home. Sir Philip Francis also was one of those who deplored the secession.* To the Union between England and Ireland in 1801 Grey was opposed. He doubted whether it would ever be sealed by the

* Francis to Fox, November 16, 1797. "Memoirs of Sir Philip Francis" (Junius), vol. ii. p. 305.

Emancipation which Pitt appeared to promise. He knew that the Irish people in general looked forward to it with dread, and that they had no lawful and constitutional means of expressing their genuine convictions. He knew also very well that Lord Cornwallis, the Viceroy, Lord Castlereagh, the Secretary of State, and Lord Clare, the Chancellor, were actively engaged in buying supporters of the ministerial plan.* This fact alone would have disinclined him towards it; for he held that a righteous cause stands in no need of artifice and corruption. He saw, moreover, that the influx of one hundred Irish members, representing close boroughs, into the English House of Commons, would strengthen the power of ministers and decrease the chances of an independent parliament. It was otherwise thirty years afterwards, when Emancipation had been granted, and when Reform was probable. Then he vigorously resisted O'Connell's agitation for Repeal, and defended very properly the Union which he had once opposed.

On the eastern coast of Northumberland, and about a mile from the sea, rises the mansion of Howick, in the midst of glens richly wooded and rocks sloping to the beach. About it, in every direction, are romantic walks, seven miles in their aggregate length. There every variety of inland and marine scenery is to be enjoyed. There may be seen from the Heugh all the indentures of

* Flanagan's "British and Irish History," p. 828; "Life and Opinions of Earl Grey," p. 52.

the coast, with Dunstanborough and Bamborough in the distance (as Scott describes them in "*Marmion*"*) on one side, and Warkworth and Coquet Island, with its white lighthouse, on the other; and there the beauty of nature's solitude was even less invaded at the beginning of the century than it is now. To journey thence to town at that period was the weary work of four long days. But the retreat had its recluse—a man eminently qualified for public life, and destined to be at a later epoch prime minister of England and chief agent in the accomplishment of one of the most important events in her history.

It was there, in short, in 1801, that Mr. Grey, who had become Lord Howick when his father was raised to the peerage by Addington, retired from the arena of politics which he detested,† and buried himself, like Fox at St. Ann's Hill, in sylvan and domestic delights. There, with a wife and children whom he tenderly loved, he planted with his own hand almost every tree now standing; there he farmed and laid out walks, clambered over the rocks with the boys, read Tacitus, watched the growth of his hyacinths, and wrote long letters to Fox.

When urged by that statesman to return to his parliamentary duties, he, who was of all men most capable, pleaded his incapacity for business. Yet he did not resist beyond a certain point. He yielded at last—it was in 1803—to the importunity of his friends. He would

* Canto ii.

† "Correspondence," 1804.

quit the gardens of Howick, where the bees hummed and the surf resounded. The Peace of Amiens was about to be broken, and the voice of wise counsels was to be drowned by the drums of gathering hosts. He would go up and look on the weakness of Addington's cabinet. He would see what could be done to maintain peace, if indeed Napoleon were not unalterably bent on war. He would warn Fox not to be too lenient in his interpretation of the Corsican's designs. He would sustain the honour of England in arms, if to arms she was forced. He might too, under some not very probable circumstances—he *might* consent to a union with Addington, if Fox and himself were sure of having a majority in the cabinet. He might, failing this combination, join the Grenvilles, though they had shared in Pitt's government and had approved his policy.

To town, therefore, he went, but not as yet to unite with any but his old leader, Fox. The Opposition, consisting of Foxites, Grenvillites, and, at the last, of Pitt himself, moved in separate columns. Before this formidable array "the Doctor" fairly ran away. Lord Eldon had secretly betrayed him, and coquetted with Pitt. The great orator was recalled, and made overtures to some of Fox's party, when the King resolutely refused to let Fox himself sit in the cabinet. But Lord Howick's attachment to his friend was sincere, and "no earthly consideration," he said, "should make him accept office without Fox." There is little doubt that what Canning said was

true, and that Pitt might, if he had chosen, have overruled the King's objection to Fox. It is impossible, however, not to respect the loyalty with which Pitt deferred on this and on other occasions to the wishes and prejudices of his royal master. A king is not to be regarded merely as an individual: he is a representative personage. He is not only the head of the nation, but is, as it were, the nation impersonated; and a prime minister who should pride himself on reducing his sovereign to submission—who should push him to extremities, even at the risk of his becoming insane—would have the heart of a traitor and the head of a democrat.

It was not until the Pitt administration was dissolved by its leader's death that Lord Howick rose to a place in the government. He was one of the brightest stars in the galaxy called "All the Talents." The esteem in which he was held by Lord Holland may be gathered from the lines written by the latter on himself:—

"Nephew to Fox, and friend to Grey,
Enough my meed of fame,
If those who've deigned to watch me say
I've tarnish'd neither name!"

But in the ministry he was all but powerless, being unsupported by the King. If his politics had been mixed, like those of Grenville, who was the enemy of Reform, or changeable, like those of the Duke of Portland, who was a Whig-deserter, he might have got on better; but he was made of stouter material. He preferred doing nothing to

doing wrong. As First Lord of the Admiralty he found it a hard task to satisfy applicants for places and pensions. His happiness, he said, had fled with the cares of office, his nights passed without sleep, and he longed to resign. Nor would he avail himself of his position to enrich his family. So firmly was he set against nepotism, that when premier in after life, from 1830 to 1834, not one of his seven younger sons, all indifferently provided for, derived any advantage from his being at the head of the government. The death of Fox in 1806 placed him in the foremost ranks of the Whigs. The letters of condolence which he received from the Prince of Wales, containing unbounded profession of attachment to the memory and politics of Fox, were strikingly characteristic of the faithlessness of the writer. In the light of his subsequent conduct they read like the language of an accomplished hypocrite.

During Lord Howick's short tenure of office little opportunity was afforded him of carrying into effect one of the objects dearest to his heart—the relief of Irish Roman Catholics. He knew how hopeless it was to plead their cause before the Commons, then assembled. He might as well have discoursed on mercy and justice to a pack of wolves. “We have had two debates,” he wrote on the 6th of March, 1807, to his uncle, Lord Ponsonby; “one on the extended grant to Maynooth, and the other on the introduction of the bill (for admitting Catholic officers into the army and navy) yesterday, which have

exhibited on the part of our opponents such a spirit of illiberality and bigotry as would have been worthy of the darkest ages of superstition and intolerance."

That bill was the downfall of the Grenville cabinet ; but it is curious to remark how Lord Sidmouth, who helped to procure its overthrow, proposed ten years later, when a member of the Liverpool Administration, a measure neither more nor less in substance and effect, respecting oaths to be taken by Roman Catholic officers. Lord Howick's determination to abide by the Catholic cause contrasts well with Pitt's proposal to abandon it in 1801, before the Addington ministry was confirmed in office.* This fidelity caused the exclusion of Lord Howick (Grey) from all share in the government during three-and-twenty years. Thrown out of the representation of Northumberland by the No-Popery cry, he was elected for Appleby ; but by his father's death in November, 1807, he removed from the Lower House, where his services were greatly needed, and took his seat as Earl Grey, by the side of Lord Grenville, in the House of Lords.

The Opposition in the Commons suffered greatly by his loss. George Ponsonby, the late Chancellor of Ireland, did his best to keep them together ; but they barely recognised his authority, and followed each man his own bent. The peace-at-any-price party, led by Mr. Whitbread, gave Lord Grey much trouble, particularly as he himself had

* "Fox's Correspondence," April 19, 1804.

never gone quite so far even as Fox in advocating peace with France. Whitbread lugged in the topic in all companies by the head and shoulders, and was as earnest in urging it in season and out of season as Wilberforce was in pleading for the negroes. Whether Lord Grey was right in the view which he took of the seizure of the Danish fleet which Canning so warmly defended, may reasonably be a matter of doubt. It seems to have been one of those acts which are justified by the unscrupulous logic of war; yet Canning, who often indulged in declamation and claptrap, may not have been wholly undeserving of the charge that Lord Grey brought against his speech in his defence. "It will, I have no doubt," he said, "be very much celebrated. It certainly was eloquent and powerful, at least the parts I heard of it; but for audacious misrepresentation, and even for positive falsehood, I never heard it equalled."

In supposing that the Irish bishops would ever submit to a *вето* on the appointment to sees being yielded to the Crown, Lord Grey strangely miscalculated the firmness of the Episcopal body. The notion of such a compromise had, indeed, been started by some Liberals as one of the adjuncts of the Union, but never received, and never could receive, the formal sanction of the heads of the Church.* The Duke of Bedford, Lord Grenville, and Mr. Whitbread did wisely in disagreeing with Lord

* Flanagan, "British and Irish History," p. 881. *Tablet*, Jan. 21, 1871. "English Administrations."

Grey in his opinion as to the expediency of requiring it. Strong, indeed, as Grey's judgment was in most cases, he was sometimes at fault. There were moments in the course of the Peninsular War when the enormous number of the French troops, the disasters sustained by Sir John Moore, the retirement of Wellington within the lines of Torres Vedras, and the faithless, irresolute conduct of Spaniards and Portuguese, made him doubt the propriety and possibility of continuing the conflict in Spain. It was a want of faith on his part, as he afterwards allowed.

The ultimate success of our dogged resistance to Napoleon in Spain has, more than any other circumstance, justified Pitt's war policy in the eyes of his partisans, and exalted it above that of Fox. Neither Pitt, Perceval, nor Lord Liverpool, staked the issues of the war on the individual exertions of Great Britain, but they relied on the chance of unforeseen catastrophies befalling the French legions, as in effect they did befall them in the retreat from Moscow. He who pursues the difficult path of duty must always trust largely to providential contingencies.

When Mr. Perceval was called upon to construct a ministry in the place of that one which had been broken up by the quarrel between Castlereagh and Canning and the paralysis of the Duke of Portland, Lord Grey was requested to take part in it. Of this polite offer, Sir Samuel Romilly says: "It was probably not intended as an insult to Lord Grenville and Lord Grey. But surely no greater insult could be offered to any public men, than

to suppose them to be so eager to be in power." Lord Grey's refusal was immediate and by return of post. The Prince of Wales, in spite of all his profession of Whig principles, retained the Perceval Administration when he came to the Regency in 1811, and, in consequence of the Opposition being much divided, that administration managed to linger out an unhealthy existence till an assassin brought it to an end. The negotiations which the Prince entered into with Grey and Grenville led to no result, except that of convincing them that the Regent was gradually identifying himself with a policy the very reverse of that which he had espoused in his youth: he did not even make use of a speech which these noblemen prepared, at his request, in answer to the addresses of parliament on his coming to the Regency.*

In the following year those negotiations were renewed, but with infinite dissatisfaction to all the parties concerned. The Prince was guided by no principle but that of selfishness, every species of double dealing was employed by him in treating for new ministers; he was more and more careless about relieving Catholics and purifying the representation; and at last he refused to accede to the demand of Lords Grey and Grenville respecting appointments to offices in the Household, and conferred on Lord Liverpool the task of forming a cabinet. The privilege of dismissing the members of the Household and appointing fresh ones is a recognised part of a premier's office

* English Cyclopædia. Art. "Grey."

when he comes into power ; and Sir Robert Peel, it will be remembered, refused to be made head of the government in 1840 because the Queen was not willing to yield to him the dismissal of the wives and female relatives of former ministers.

During ten years—from 1807 to 1817—Lords Grey and Grenville stood side by side in the Opposition offered to the Duke of Portland, Mr. Perceval, and Lord Liverpool. The former of the two noblemen was the acknowledged chief of the Whigs, and his attendance in parliament was more or less active during the whole time just mentioned. In 1817, however, differences arose between them, which it may be well to explain, for in consequence of these they separated completely, and the band of resistance which they had headed was broken up.

The proceedings of the Congress of Vienna in 1815 had been highly distasteful to them both. They saw with regret that it re-established in Europe the same system of arbitrary rule which had provoked the spirit of revolution, and apportioned provinces to kingdoms and empires without regard to the wishes and interests of the populations concerned. They agreed in thinking that (in spite of these deplorable arrangements of the Congress of Vienna) it was necessary for England to remain strictly in concert with the Allied Powers, when Napoleon had escaped from Elba in March, 1815. But having gone thus far together, they diverged. Grenville was for immediate action, for war with Napoleon per-

sonally. Grey was for keeping on the defensive, and for maintaining peace with France, whoever might be at its head, till some act of aggression should make war inevitable.

There was something almost sentimental in this tenderness for Carnage-Personified let loose again on the nations. The delay of one month might have been fatal to the common cause, and might have given Napoleon time to place all Europe under martial law. That England should remain at peace with France under his rule, as Lord Grey thought it possible that she might remain, would have been to sacrifice her allies to his insatiable ambition. It was not to be dreamed of for a moment, nor can the warmest adherent of Lord Grey blame his friend for dissenting from so timid and mistaken a view.

But the question of peace or war with Napoleon was not the only one which divided them. Their unity on most points, as, for example, on resistance to the government scheme of increasing the system of protection by new corn laws, could not prevent their splitting on the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act and on other coercive measures adopted by the government in 1817. Lord Grenville was one of the committee appointed to inquire into the state of the country. The new bills were founded on the report of that committee, and were supported by Lord Grenville without any reservation. But Grey's ideas were cast in another mould. He adhered to the

opinions which he had entertained in 1794 and 1795. If distress was felt in all branches of national industry, there was, he thought, the more reason why the sufferers should be allowed to express it. He was as strongly opposed as Lord Sidmouth himself to meetings really seditious, to attempts to seduce soldiers from their allegiance, to books and pamphlets assailing the royal authority, to universal suffrage, the ballot, and annual parliaments ; but he did not see that because some reformers, under the pressure of poverty, used intemperate language, and because some writers circulated extravagant opinions, the ministry ought therefore to suspend the liberties of the subject guaranteed by the Habeas Corpus Act, and to empower, as Lord Sidmouth, by his letter of March 27, 1817, empowered, all justices of the peace to apprehend and imprison, unless bail could be procured, any person charged merely with selling, publishing, or circulating a writing thought libellous.

During four hours Earl Grey reasoned in the House of Lords against the bills introduced by Lords Sidmouth and Castlereagh. But there were few with whom his arguments had weight, and he was left in a pitiful minority. The house that he took in Portman Square in 1810, and the seasons that he passed in town in order to be present in parliament, had brought, and continued to bring him, disappointment and sorrow, till the death of Lord Castlereagh by suicide, in 1822. Nor was the reason of his discomfort difficult to assign. "During these twelve

years of peace, England found her government more anxious, more immovable, more inaccessible to any reform and liberal innovation, than it had been when the war was at its height, during its greatest efforts and its greatest dangers."*

Besides all this, Lord Grey had personal troubles. The lukewarmness and disaffection of many of his friends afflicted him keenly. He was weary of being intruded on by "shoals of people," and of having endless papers sent him to read. The nervous agitation which preceded his classical and dignified speeches was almost morbid. It even increased upon him as time went on, and he was, as he said, "continually asking himself how, without the slightest chance of doing any good, he could be such a fool as voluntarily to create to himself so much uneasiness." "Oh, how I wish I were again at Howick!" "I shall not have a happy moment till I see the carriage at the door to take me back to Howick." Such are the exclamations with which his correspondence abounds.

In 1819, he struggled again against the coercive measures of the ruling powers. In 1820, he took an unwilling part in the unfortunate proceedings relative to Queen Caroline, in the House of Peers. In 1821, he tried to provoke an offer of assistance to the Neapolitans and others who were in revolt; and on a similar occasion the Rev. Sydney Smith wrote a most witty letter to Lady

* Guizot, "Memoirs of Peel," p. 11.

Grey on the folly of being ready to fight for everybody who was, or who pretended to be, oppressed. "For God's sake," he exclaimed, "do not drag me into another war! I am worn down, and worn out, with crusading and defending Europe, and protecting mankind; I *must* think a little of myself. I am sorry for the Spaniards—I am sorry for the Greeks—I deplore the fate of the Jews; the people of the Sandwich Islands are groaning under the most detestable tyranny; Bagdad is oppressed; I do not like the present state of the Delta; Thibet is not comfortable. Am I to fight for all these people? The world is bursting with sin and sorrow. And am I to be the champion of the Decalogue, and eternally raising fleets and armies to make all men good and happy? We have just done saving Europe, and I am afraid the consequence will be that we shall cut each other's throats. No war, dear Lady Grey! No eloquence; but apathy, selfishness, common sense, arithmetic! I beseech you, secure Lord Grey's sword and pistols, as the housekeeper did Don Quixote's armour. If there is another war, life will not be worth having."*

In 1823, the Duke of Wellington kindly gave Lord Grey the use of Government House at Devonport, when Lady Grey's health required a more southerly climate than Northumberland. From that time till he took office, in 1830, he discerned on the horizon growing signs of

* "Memoir of the Rev. Sydney Smith," vol. ii., Letter 217, February 19, 1823.

a political dawn. Emancipation in the Liverpool cabinet was an open question; the minorities in favour of Reform increased; the foreign policy of Canning was adverse to the principles of the famous Alliance; the political disabilities of Dissenters were removed; and Wellington and Peel, in 1829, astonished mankind by breaking through the traditions of their party, and throwing open the doors of parliament to the long ostracised members of the Catholic Church. The great work of Lord Grey's life was reserved for his declining years. In his sixty-sixth year he found himself placed, without his own seeking, in an exalted and powerful position, where the accomplishment of the fond purpose of his career from youth upwards was no longer a dream.

It was in the same session in which Lord Grey (as already stated) treated Canning as a brilliant and dexterous adventurer, that he supported the amendment of the Duke of Wellington, which led to the abandonment of Canning's Corn Bill.* He knew that his vote would be unpopular, and that he would be taunted with inconsistency. But "if," he said, "there should come a contest between this House and a great portion of the people, my part is taken, and *with that order to which I belong I will stand or fall*. I will maintain to the last hour of my existence the privilege and independence of this House." Remarkable words, and no less wise than remarkable. Yet the speaker was the great

* English Cyclopædia. Art. "Grey."

champion of popular rights, and the passer of the Reform Bill.

The events which brought him back to power followed closely on each other towards the end of 1830. On the 26th of October an inquiry into the Civil List was moved by Sir Henry Parnell. At any other time it would have been repulsed almost without a hearing. But Wellington and Peel had incensed their own party by passing the Act of Emancipation, and some of them in revenge joined with the Whigs, who were excited to fresh ardour by the recent dethronement of Charles X. On the 9th of November the King was to have dined in the City, but the chance of a riot was so great, and the Duke of Wellington had made himself so obnoxious to the people by declaring in an uncalled-for manner against Reform, that it was thought prudent to countermand the arrangements. The Duke and Mr. Peel had a hard battle to fight for two days in their respective places. On the 15th the debate on the Civil List of the new reign came on, and the ministers were defeated by a majority of twenty-nine. On the 16th they resigned, and announced, each in his place, that Lord Grey had been intrusted by King William IV. with the formation of a cabinet. Of course his Majesty was not over-pleased at the way in which his Civil List had been dealt with; nor did he, in the correspondence commenced between him and Lord Grey, on the subject of Reform, on the 22nd of November, make any concealment of his wish to postpone that ques-

tion, nor of the regret that he felt for the necessity, if necessity there were, of bringing it forward at all.*

I have already touched on the several stages of the three Reform Bills introduced into parliament in the years 1831 and 1832. It was a most critical period in the history of our Constitution, and the unwillingness and the refusal of the King to override the decision of the Lords by a large creation of Whig peers cannot be too highly commended. His letters are marked in a high degree by wisdom and moderation; nor can his correspondence be charged with any inclination to resort to extreme measures. Perhaps he felt convinced that when there was a formidable collision between the two Houses, it would be a lesser evil to terminate the conflict by a fresh creation, than to expose the House of Lords at so perilous a moment to the fury of popular indignation. Perhaps, too, he imagined that the Upper House exceeded its province if it resisted, session after session, the will of that assembly which more immediately represented the people. In any case, we have reason to rejoice in the prudence of the Duke of Wellington, who, by inducing his friends in the Upper House to absent themselves and suffer the Reform Bill to pass, preserved the honour of the peerage to a certain extent intact, without blindly resisting a popular movement which was too strong to be trifled with.

Great talent was displayed by the Whigs in carrying

* "Correspondence of Earl Grey with William IV. and Sir Henry Taylor," 1837.

this measure successfully through parliament, and the debates on it often reminded old men of the days when Burke and Sheridan, Fox and Pitt suspended for a while the judgment of their hearers, and entranced them simply in admiration and delight. But the borough influence of the aristocracy received its death-blow from the courage and energy of Brougham rather than from the firmness and patriotism of Grey. The ingenious arguments of Sir James Mackintosh, the weighty simplicity of Plunket, and the brilliant declamation of Macaulay, told less perhaps on the fortune of the day than the resolute Cromwell-like way in which Brougham backed the representations of his colleague, and dictated to William IV. the course he was to pursue. We are told, that he even took it on himself to order "the crown and the robes, the great officers of state, and the guards to accompany the King to the House," to dissolve parliament at the requirement of his ministers.* Several versions are given of this extraordinary proceeding, and the truth of it is often disputed.† The *Times* had shifted its ground with the utmost tact, and with the power of a magician rode and directed the storm. Lord Eldon, the ex-Chancellor, came, as he said, from the verge of the grave to warn and entreat his compeers to reject the bill; but Brougham brought his sublime, and not insincere, acting to a climax

* McGilchrist's "Life of Brougham," p. 166; "Notes to Plunket's Speeches," p. 416.

† *Daily Telegraph*. Art. "Brougham," May 11, 1868.

by falling on his knees in the House, and imploring their lordships to pass it.

Brougham and Grey were certainly genuine politicians. They did not follow a zigzag path. They did not advocate one set of opinions because they learned them of their fathers, nor because they conducted to wealth and power. They clung to them through deep conviction of their value and truth. The Reform Bill was but one of the useful changes they strove to effect. They modified the domination of the Church in Ireland, and threw the onus of tithes mainly on Protestant proprietors. They reformed the chief abuses of the municipal system in Scotland. They abolished slavery in the colonies, and opened India and China to free trade. They accomplished in four years what would have done honour to any administration of fourteen. Yet they did not move fast enough for their impatient supporters, nor even for their colleague, Lord Durham, who was the premier's son-in-law.

The Irish Church, again, proved a bone of contention in the cabinet. Mr. (soon afterwards Lord) Stanley, Sir James Graham, the Duke of Richmond, and Lord Ripon would not hear of applying the surplus revenues of the Establishment to the purpose of public education. They resigned, as well as Lord Durham, though on different grounds from those which he took; and Lord Grey himself, whose strength was failing,* and who felt wounded

* See his speech on the second reading of the Reform Bill.

by the desertion of some friends and harassed by the cabals of others, retired from the ministry in 1834. At last the rural life and the gardening which he had loved from his youth, like Sir William Temple,* were unbroken by the cares of state and the jar of politics. His time was passed chiefly at Howick, and he died on the 17th July, 1845, after an illness of two years.

Consistency, so rare among statesmen, marked his career from first to last, and though he stood forward as the champion of the people's cause, he cherished all the aristocratic feelings peculiar to his rank. This aided in giving dignity to his character. He could not be warped into falsehood even to screen a prince and to secure his favour. Though Fox allowed himself to assert in the House of Commons what he might easily have known to be untrue, that no marriage had taken place between the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert, Lord Grey could not be induced to lend himself to a similar mis-statement,† or to invent a new form of prevarication. He saw how impossible it was to entangle himself in so awkward an affair without offending many persons and giving satisfaction to none. He knew that the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert were man and wife according to the laws of the Church, but not according to the law of England. He was well aware of their having been married in Mrs. Fitzherbert's drawing-room in Park

* See his "Essay on Gardening."

† Hugh Miller. "Earl Grey," p. 65.

Lane,* by a Protestant clergyman, and partly according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church, in the presence of that lady's relatives; and that every care had been taken to satisfy her conscience as to the validity of the marriage. But he knew also that by an alliance with a Roman Catholic the Prince would (if the fact were established) forfeit his claim to the Throne, and that neither his friends nor his enemies wished the story to be true. He therefore declined the honour of vindicating Mrs. Fitzherbert's character, which Fox had by implication aspersed, and left it to Sheridan to pay her, in the House of Commons, a high-flown compliment, which proved nothing, and only threw additional mystery round an affair that time has now fully explained.†

Of Lord Grey's general ability no one can doubt, yet it is needless to remark that he gave a direction to popular movements rather than originated them. His name will be for ever associated with that of Reform, as closely as Walpole's with maintaining the Protestant Succession; Chatham's with the supremacy of England; Pitt's with her defence; Fox's with peace and liberty; Canning's with our foreign policy; Wellington's with Roman Catholic Emancipation; Peel's with the abolition of the Corn Laws; Lord Derby's and Disraeli's with Household Suffrage; and Gladstone's with the disestablishment of the Irish Church. Though he loved his country as she

* December 21, 1785.

† Hon. Charles Langdale's "Life of Mrs. Fitzherbert."

deserves to be loved, his policy of peace and non-intervention differed not a little from the foreign policy of a subsequent premier, Lord Palmerston, of whom his biographer has said in a palliating tone: "He wished to make and to keep England at the head of the world, and to cherish in the minds of others the notion that she was so."

* Sir H. L. Bulwer's "Life of Lord Palmerston."

MELBOURNE AND PEEL.

“ England has ever in her secret heart
Most favoured chiefs, who somewhat stand apart
From those they lead; let brother love each other,
But if too much, they may neglect their mother.
Pitt in his prime was not a party-man,
And Peel seemed born to end as Pitt began.”

LORD LYTTON—“St. Stephen's.”

XVI.

MELBOURNE AND PEEL.

WHEN Earl Grey retired in July, 1834, his place in the cabinet was taken by Lord Melbourne without any further change till the month of November. That nobleman was then fifty-six years of age. He had entered parliament under Whig patronage, and had acquired considerable popularity in Ireland, where Canning appointed him Secretary of State. Under the exterior of a dandy, he was a man of shrewd intellect, and had a serene, philosophical way of looking at life and its phantasms. A slight nervousness and a want of ready utterance marred his speeches, which were racy in language, vigorous, and straight to the point. He had a certain sauntering air, an assumed lackadaisical manner, which gave superficial observers the idea that he was only a clever fribble.* In 1828 he took his seat in the House of Lords on the death of his father, and, as Secretary for the Home Department under Lord Grey, he had contributed to the passing of the Reform Bill and

* Maddyn, "Chiefs of Parties," vol. i. 238-39.

other changes of a liberal kind. But when he had risen into Lord Grey's seat at the head of the Treasury, and when, in November of the same year, the leader of the House of Commons, Lord Althorp, became Earl Spencer, the premier was much puzzled to find one who should succeed him in that capacity.

It was necessary to go to Brighton, and to talk over with the King the arrangements which he proposed. To his surprise, William IV. was anything but compliant, and spoke so plainly about consulting the Duke of Wellington, that Lord Melbourne, always a cool and graceful courtier, undertook to be the bearer to the Duke of the King's letter instructing him to form a cabinet. The *Times* ascribed it all to Queen Adelaide, who was a zealous Tory. The Duke was summoned to Brighton,* and gave signal proofs of his modesty and also of his power. "It is not to me," he said, "that your Majesty must look for a premier, but to Sir Robert Peel. The head of the government should be in the House of Commons. I will serve under him in any capacity your Majesty may think fit, and until he returns from Italy, I will take upon myself the responsibility of the entire administration." He did so, with unexampled diligence, for three weeks, in concert with Lord Lyndhurst, and then, on the 9th of December, 1834, remitted the task of choosing a ministry into the hands of the ablest and the most distinguished of his friends.

* November, 1834.

Since Walpole and Pitt there is no English premier who has directed the course of public affairs by the force of his own mind so largely as Sir Robert Peel. Inferior statesmen are borne along by strong currents, which they seem to guide; but great statesmen, like Peel, are always making broad and deep channels in which the stream may flow. He sprang, as Canning sprang, from the middle class of society, being the son of a cotton-spinner who, with the help of Sir Richard Arkwright's invention, and of Compton's mule, became a millionaire and a baronet. He was a seriously-minded man, and when Robert was born, in a cottage near Chamber Hall (the family residence), on the 5th of February, 1788, he fell on his knees, returned thanks to God, and vowed that he would give his son to the service of his country.*

The boy was never allowed to lose sight of his ultimate destination. When his father entered parliament as member for Tamworth he was just two years old, and he soon began to understand that he must one day speak in that House of Commons where his father sat, and that his hands must help to build up the family honour. Constantly on Sundays, when church was over, Mr. Peel would place Robert on a table or lead him to the study † to repeat the sermon, and with his earliest accents he was made to lisp the revered name of Pitt. Before he was breeched he had learned to regard that minister as the model of

* "Life of Sir R. Peel," by Sir Lawrence Peel, p. 40.

† Ibid., p. 45.

English statesmen; and when he sat on the same form with Byron at Harrow, and rivalled the poet as a disclaimer and actor, and surpassed him greatly (as Byron himself allowed) in scholarship, ambition equally noble and loyal already fired his breast. At Oxford he figured in the first class list in classics and mathematics, and was the first Oxonian who had been thus distinguished.*

Not a day was to be lost after this success. A borough must be found for him immediately. His father's hopes were even now half realised, and were too bright and precious to be retarded. The vacant seat of Cashel was secured for him, and in 1809, at the age of twenty-one, he entered the field of his future triumphs. The income which his father placed at his disposal was equal to that of many a nobleman. The Pitt traditions were sacred in his eyes, yet not so sacred but that he submitted them daily to the severest tests in the crucible of his secret thoughts. It was some time before he passed in the House for a star of the first magnitude. He was painstaking rather than brilliant, and was more highly appreciated by cabinet ministers than by his colleagues in parliament. The old race of orators had died away, but it required no mean debater to shine beside Grattan and Tierney, Sheridan, Romilly, Windham, and Canning. But Perceval made him Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies

* *Blackwood's Magazine*, September, 1860, p. 258. "Life of Peel" (Routledge, 1850), p. 29.

in 1811; and Lord Liverpool having proved his ability as Chief Secretary for Ireland, promoted him to the Secretaryship of State for the Home Department, in place of Lord Sidmouth, in 1821.

During seventeen years he served actively and loyally under Tory governments—under Tories, like Lord Castlereagh and Lord Eldon, whose Toryism was Russian and Ottoman compared with Pitt's. Of this intolerant party he was the spokesman—the foremost foe of O'Connell and of Catholic Emancipation—yet resisting this measure not on principle, but on grounds of national expediency. Hence, in 1817, he bore away the palm from Canning in a contested election for the University of Oxford. In pleading for Roman Catholics Mr. Canning had committed the unpardonable sin, and converted the heads of Houses into so many Gorgons.

As Secretary for Ireland Peel earned for himself a good reputation. He extended the police system through the provinces, and did all in his power to mitigate the severity of a harsh rule. But though respected, he was not beloved. He was cold and uncommunicative. The nickname which they gave him in Ireland was Orange-Peel. O'Connell never ceased to arraign him and sneer at him, while Lady Morgan quizzed him in one of her novels. "They have sent us," said the Liberator, "a raw youth, squeezed out of the workings of I know not what factory, and not past the foppery of perfumed handkerchiefs and thin shoes, to govern us."

Yet the raw youth rose steadily.* Extreme diligence and attention to detail supplied in him the defect of genius, and enabled him in the end to outdo other men who were possessed of more showy talents. Though long and closely connected with the executive government, his mind never contracted to the measure of his masters; though he supported their measures, he did not adopt their prejudices, but, as subsequent events proved, sat loose to the doctrine of exclusive establishments, Paper Currency, and Protection in trade. His "unexpansiveness," indeed, prevented others from seeing what was going on in his mind, and Croker used to complain of him, "*Il ne se déboutonne pas.*"

There is an amusing story told apropos to his reticence. A party of his friends, among whom was Mr. Croker, met one day at Drayton. After their morning's sport they assembled at dinner, and Sir Robert Peel, then prime minister, told them how his little nephew had swallowed a button. They had been obliged to send for the doctor, who at last, as Sir Robert said, "got everything out of the child." "William," exclaimed Croker across the table to the boy's father, "I wish that somebody *would give Sir Robert a button.*"

In February, 1813, Peel opposed Grattan's motion for a committee to consider the Roman Catholic claims, and he resisted Sir Henry Parnell's motion again on the same

* Sir Lawrence Peel, p. 112, et seq.; Lord Cloncurry's "Personal Reminiscences," p. 198.

subject in 1815. Yet it was clear that his views were by no means those of the extreme Orange party. He would fain have merged the strife of religious proselytism in the cooler element of practical and secular education. Like all moderate men, he displeased both parties. He temporised too much for the Tories, and he was too exacting for the Emancipationists. Yet as Irish Secretary in the Liverpool administration, he certainly acted with dutiful consistency. It was not for him, in such a position, to devise a policy of his own.

When elected member for the University of Oxford in 1818, he vacated the post which he held in the government, to the regret of his colleagues, and from 1818 to 1822 he remained without any official connection with the Liverpool-Castlereagh ministry.* The Oxford *Dons* were proud of him as a steadfast Protestant; but in the end, his proclivities towards Emancipation and Free Trade disappointed them bitterly, as Mr. Gladstone's declension to disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish Church has revolted them more recently in an almost equal degree. In each case also the result was the same. Peel was rejected by the University in March, 1829, in favour of Sir Robert Harry Inglis; and Mr. Gladstone, in 1865, was compelled to give way to Mr. Gathorne Hardy.

One of the first proofs that Peel gave publicly of the independence of his mind was in May, 1819, when the

* English Cyclopædia. Art. "Peel."

question of the Bank of England's resuming cash payments instead of notes was brought under discussion. In 1797 it had been authorised, under Pitt's administration, and with the support of the first Sir Robert Peel, to decline giving cash for its notes. Paper money had thus multiplied and decreased in value. In 1811 a committee of the House of Commons had recommended that cash payments should be required at the end of two years, but Lord Liverpool, the two Peels, and the old Pittites, had resisted the innovation supported by Canning, Horner, the head of the Economists, and Ricardo.

In 1819 another committee was appointed, with Robert Peel as its chairman. Among his colleagues were Lord Castlereagh, Canning, Vansittart, Tierney, Frederick Robinson, Huskisson, and Sir James Mackintosh. He became convinced of the expediency of returning to the system which prevailed previously to 1797, and of paying in cash, where cash was called for. A striking scene occurred. The father rose, and deplored the defection of his son, whom he had trained from his earliest years to follow in the track of William Pitt. The son replied, frankly confessing that his opinion had undergone a material change in consequence of the evidence given to the committee. He was a convert to the principle that "the true standard of value consists in a definite quantity of gold bullion," and lamented the painful necessity of opposing himself to an authority to which he had always bowed, and to which he hoped that

he always should bow, with reverence. The House, it need hardly be added, adopted the committee's propositions. The Bank anticipated by two years the time fixed for its cash payments, and Peel's reputation for skill in finance was already established. He approved of the Five Coercive Acts, and defended the conduct of ministers in the Manchester Massacre of 1819, but he kept aloof from the invidious proceedings against Queen Caroline, which followed the accession of George IV.*

It was in June, 1820, when Peel was in his thirty-third year, that he entered the married life. The lady whom he espoused was Julia, daughter of General Sir John Floyd. As time went on, his hostility to Catholic Emancipation seemed to decline, for though he still voted against it, he did so with manifest repugnance. Whatever decision the House might come to, he said, he should give it his best acquiescence, and if the measure should be carried, he should use his earnest endeavours to reconcile the Protestants to it. Thus, though the Lords continued to oppose the wishes of the Commons on this head, it was evident that a feeling in favour of Emancipation was gaining ground, and that it must sooner or later prevail. The Test Acts passed under Charles II. became more and more subject to severe criticism, and people began to regard the duke, the five earls, the two viscounts, and thirteen barons who forfeited their seats in the days of Shaftesbury and Buckingham as the victims

* English Cyclopædia. Art. "Peel."

of a policy of exclusion which ought no longer to be endured.*

When it was proposed to re-admit Catholic Lords into the Upper House, Peel offered but slight opposition to the bill, nor did he object to granting English Catholics the same electoral rights as were enjoyed by their brethren in Ireland. His Tory friends were offended by his moderation, nor could they comprehend his anxiety to promote education among the Catholic as well as among the Protestant part of the population. He had scarcely been Home Secretary six months when he bore witness to the benevolent exertions of Sir Samuel Romilly and Sir James Mackintosh,† and revised, by means of five bills in succession, the entire penal system, simplifying and humanizing the laws regarding prison-discipline, transportation, police, and punishment by death. His success was envied by the Whigs, and they only wished that he were one of themselves. "In matters purely departmental," says a writer by no means inclined to overrate Peel, "no minister ever effected greater changes, and all of them for the better."‡

The brilliancy of Canning's eloquence, however, and of his abilities in general, had the effect of throwing Peel somewhat into the shade. From the moment of Lord Castlereagh's suicide, Canning rose in public estimation ;

* Flanagan's "British and Irish History," p. 665.

† Sir H. L. Bulwer's "Historical Characters," vol. ii. p. 56.

‡ *Blackwood's Magazine*, September, 1860.

and his management of foreign affairs at last brought him to the head of the government. But George IV. disliked him as having been one of the Queen's friends, and the Tories distrusted him as a politician of mongrel breed. Even the Duke of Wellington, who had procured his admission into the cabinet from the reluctant sovereign, regarded his foreign policy as unsound, and his liberal opinions on many points as dangerous. Peel had abundant reason to be jealous of him; yet if he were so in his heart, he never showed it. He knew that nature had given Canning a genial and sociable disposition, a seductiveness of address, and a fascination of oratory, to which he could lay no claim. But he was conscious also of possessing other qualities, less dazzling but more substantial, to which his rival was a stranger. When that rival became premier, in 1827, Peel and the Duke of Wellington, Lord Eldon, and others, resigned their places in the ministry. The new premier would gladly have retained Peel as a colleague, but his overtures were promptly rejected.* The Catholic question was postponed for the moment, and before it could be introduced again Canning's mortal career had closed.

Lord Goderich made an abortive attempt to rule; but he was deserted by Mr. Huskisson on a question of minor importance, plotted against by the King, and, above all, upset by sheer incapacity. Great questions are the life of brilliant administrations, but they are the overthrow and

* See T. Doubleday's "Political Life of Peel."

death of feeble premiers. Lord Goderich had defended the Roman Catholic claims as Canning's colleague, but as prime minister he lost all power of pressing them on the attention of the parliament and the people. In little more than five months his reign was at an end, and in January, 1828, Peel was leader of the House of Commons and Home Secretary in the Wellington administration. He had refused to unite with Canning the year before because Canning favoured Emancipation, and he was now closely leagued with a premier about to carry that measure through with a resolute hand !

The country marvelled at the change, yet it was far less sudden than people supposed. Two years before Canning died, Peel had expressed to Lord Liverpool his conviction that Emancipation must pass, and had offered to resign. So long ago as 1821 he had declared, in reply to Plunket, that if his own views prevailed, "their prevalence must still be mingled with regret at the disappointment which he knew the success of such opinions must entail upon a great portion of his fellow subjects." He should, he said, "cordially rejoice if his predictions proved unfounded and his arguments groundless."

There were those who perceived the current which his thoughts were taking, and among them was the Duke of Clarence. One of the duke's sons told Cardinal Acton that when he returned home one night from a very late division in the House of Commons (of which he was a member), he went to his father's dressing-room, and was

asked by the duke how the division on Emancipation had gone; and when he was told that the bill had been lost, the duke said—"That rascal Peel will adopt Emancipation, will carry it, and take the glory from us who have fought for it all our lives."*

About this time the speeches of O'Connell and the melodies of Moore had kindled the enthusiasm of the Irish to such a degree that further resistance to their just demands was perilous, if not impossible. The mass of evidence touching the state of Ireland which came before Peel, and the impression which it made on his mind day by day, may be seen in the posthumous volumes edited by Lord Stanhope and Mr. Cardwell, Sir Robert Peel's trustees.† It was not without reluctance that he yielded to the urgency of the case. His doubts had to be resolved one by one with facts and arguments. He would take nothing on trust, and would hazard no conjecture. Everything had to be proved.

It was a long and arduous process, known only to himself; and its result was that he could support only a part of Wellington's original plan. He could not reconcile himself to the clause for paying the Catholic bishops and clergy in Ireland, and for obliging them to officiate under licences from the Crown. He went as far as he could; and it was quite far enough to eject him for ever from the confidence of the Tories. Nor did he acquire that

* Anecdote related to the writer by the late Bishop Grant.

† Sir Robert Peel's "Memoirs," 2 vols.

of the Irish whom he emancipated. O'Connell regarded him with implacable aversion; and it was through life his misfortune and his glory to have enemies on all sides, to be a party in himself, and to bear individually the responsibility both of fixedness and change in his political opinions.

As his acceptance of Lord John Russell's Bill for relieving Protestant Dissenters had been the prelude to Catholic Emancipation, so his sliding-scale, or duty on foreign grain varying according to the price of home-grown grain, was the first step towards the entire abolition of the Corn Laws. His plans were eminently prospective. How, indeed, could he otherwise have been the great statesman he was? In Ireland, however, he did not carry out the principles involved in the Relief Act. The power of the Orangemen was not abridged, and no effort was made to modify by concession the growing demands for Reform, and to slacken O'Connell's movement in favour of triennial parliaments, universal suffrage, and vote by ballot.*

The Sale of Beer Bill did little towards saving the Government, though it took the direction of Free Trade, and their refusing to appoint a committee to inquire into the silk-weavers' distress increased their unpopularity in that critical year 1830, when kings and cabinets were panic-stricken all over Europe. They were not sufficiently pliant even when they had nothing to lose by pliancy.

* Guizot's "Life of Peel," p. 48.

The Tories were proud of long tenure of office, and miscalculated the forces that were combining against them.* Their great men's mansions were not thrown open to merit and talent, however humble, like Lansdowne House, Holland House, and Devonshire House. They found no places for such men as Theodore Hook, Lockhart, John Wilson, and Maginn. Peel himself has told us how they coldly repulsed the advances of Disraeli in the outset of his career; and "gentlemen of the press" in general were considered unfit company for the rulers of the State.† They lost the power, which they might have retained by prudent compromise; and Peel (who had now become Sir Robert Peel by the death of his father) refused to go as far even as the Duke of Wellington, when, in the turbulent course of the Reform Bill through the House of Lords, the King called upon him to form a new ministry, to deliver him from the hands of the Whig-Radicals, to obviate the necessity of creating fresh peers, and bring forward a moderate Reform Bill, which would obtain the assent, if not the approval, of all parties.

To this proposal Peel objected that, having strenuously resisted Reform, he was bound in consistency to resist it still—a mode of argument singularly at variance with his conduct on several well-known occasions. But he gracefully conformed to changes which he could not prevent, and repudiated the usual tactics of party. He had never

* *Blackwood's Magazine*, September, 1860.

† *Ibid.*, p. 266.

he said, been an enemy to gradual and safe reforms; and if those which had taken place went farther than he could have desired, he should nevertheless stand by the altered constitution of the country, and should oppose every attempt to unsettle the existing order of things. He resisted the ballot because it would make the House of Commons more democratic than it was already; and when it was argued that the ballot would destroy the influence of property, and was therefore desirable, he replied, that if the influence of property in elections were destroyed, the security of all property, and the stability of all government, would be destroyed with it. It was absurd, he thought, to say that a man with ten thousand a year should not have more influence over the legislature than a man with ten pounds a year. It was with these feelings that, in 1830, when Lord John Russell moved the question of the disfranchising a few small and corrupt boroughs, and of transferring the representation to some of the large commercial towns which were then unrepresented, Peel opposed the motion on the ground of its introducing into the system of representation the principle of mere numbers. This principle he considered, ultra-democratic, and, in the long run, incompatible with the existence of monarchy and aristocracy.

Thus 1833, and ten months of 1834, passed by, while the strength of the Whig cabinet steadily declined. The utilitarian disciples of Bentham urged Lord Grey and his colleagues to changes more numerous and more extensive

than they were able to effect, and divisions, which have already been alluded to, arose among ministers. Lord Melbourne succeeded Earl Grey, continued premier a short time, and the Duke of Wellington, being unwilling to take his place, devolved the premiership on Peel. The Duke, indeed, was sworn in as head of the Government, but only *pro tempore* till Sir Robert Peel should arrive from Italy. The cabinet, duly formed, dates from December 9, 1834, and was thus composed :—

First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Robert Peel ;
Lord Chancellor, Lord Lyndhurst ;
President of the Council, Lord Rosslyn ;
Lord Privy Seal, Lord Wharnccliffe ;
Foreign Secretary, the Duke of Wellington ;
Home Secretary, Mr. Goulburn ;
Colonial Secretary, Lord Aberdeen ;
First Lord of the Admiralty, Earl de Grey ;
Master of the Ordnance, Sir George Murray ;
President of the Board of Trade and Master of the Mint,
Mr. Alexander Baring ;
President of the India Board, Lord Ellenborough ;
Paymaster of the Forces, Sir Edward Knatchbull ;
Secretary at War, Mr. Herries ;
Secretary for Ireland, Sir Henry Hardinge.

The letter which Peel addressed to the electors of Tamworth was a studied programme of the policy he intended

to pursue. It stamped him as a liberal Conservative and a conservative Liberal; it satisfied no extreme parties, but it secured the confidence of those who sought to unite stability with progress and principle with expediency. The new elections gave Peel a hundred additional votes; but when the question of appropriating surplus revenues of the Established Church to public education was brought forward by Lord John Russell, Peel would make no compromise, and on the 8th of April, 1835, he surrendered his high office to Lord Melbourne, who again became premier. In a letter addressed to the editor of the *Times* (Edward Sterling) he assured him of "the admiration with which he witnessed, during the arduous contest in which he had been engaged, the daily exhibition of that extraordinary ability to which he had been indebted for a support the more valuable because it was most impartial and discriminating."*

Six years of opposition followed—years not unfruitful to Peel, whose opposition was tempered by Conservative principles, and performed, as he said, many of the functions of government. It censured ministers when censure seemed to be required, and it amended measures which needed amendment, thus throwing into the scales of Whig administration a happy counterpoise, and establishing many claims on public approval.

But not even Peel's forbearance could ensure popularity to the Melbourne cabinet. Sydney Smith, speaking

* Letter, April 18, 1835. Carlyle's "Life of John Sterling," p. 307.

of it, said: "Lord John Russell is beyond all comparison the ablest man in the whole administration; and to such a degree is he superior, that the government could not exist a moment without him. If the Foreign Secretary (Palmerston) were to retire, we should no longer be nibbling ourselves into disgrace on the coast of Spain. If the amiable Lord Glenelg (Secretary for the Colonies) were to leave us, we should feel secure in our colonial possessions. If Mr. Spring Rice (Chancellor of the Exchequer) were to go into holy orders, great would be the joy of the Three per Cents. A decent, good-looking head of the government might easily be found in lieu of Viscount Melbourne; but in five minutes after the departure of Lord John the whole Whig government would be dissolved into *sparks of liberality and splinters of reform.*"*

"The noble viscount and his colleagues," said the Tory Lord Lyndhurst in 1837, "are utterly powerless—utterly inefficient and incompetent as servants of the Crown; equally powerless and incapable as regards the people. Almost every reasonable man has but one opinion of their conduct. It enlists the pity of their friends, and excites the scorn and derision of the enemies of their country."†

The pension of £300 a year which Lord Melbourne settled on Thomas Moore in 1835 was well applied. Such grants have a twofold advantage, and are no less useful

* "Letters to Archdeacon Singleton."

† Speech just before the Prorogation.

to the government which makes them than to the pensioners who receive them. They foster loyal sentiments, and enlist the talent of the country on the side of order and law, while, at the same time, they bestow on men of letters that leisure and independence which are so essential to the production of works of solid merit. It is remembered to the discredit of Walpole and Pitt that they did not encourage literature as they might have done, but left it to shift for itself. It will, on the contrary, always be recorded to the honour of statesmen in the reign of Queen Anne, that they gladly conferred pensions, places, and sinecures on writers of eminence. The faults of George the Third, the Earl of Bute, and Wedderburn (Lord Loughborough) are redeemed in part by their kindness to Dr. Johnson. Lord Spencer ennobled himself by obtaining a pension for Cowper; Burke, by befriending Crabbe, and by introducing him to Lord Thurlow; Dundas (Lord Melville), by making Burns an exciseman with £70 a year; Earl Grey, by the manner in which he treated his political adversary, Scott, when Sir Walter was bending under the weight of ill health and misfortune, and was advised to visit Italy and to breathe the air of Rome; Lord Moira, by procuring Thomas Moore an appointment in Bermuda; and Lord Melbourne, by consoling the inmates of Sloperton Cottage with an honourable and welcome pension.

It was not without great reluctance that the Queen parted with her Whig ministry for a moment in May,

1839. Many of them had been friends of her childhood, and Lord Melbourne in particular had acquired great influence over her by his agreeable conversation and his winning address. It was on this account that the Duke of Wellington advised Sir Robert Peel to stipulate that, in the event of his forming another cabinet, two of the chief offices in the royal household should be filled by his appointment. To this the Queen would by no means consent. It was quite enough to lose her ministers, she would not be bereaved also of her female friends. Those ministers assured her that it was an exorbitant pretension, and she therefore honoured Sir Robert with the following curt epistle:—

“The Queen, having considered the proposal made to her yesterday by Sir Robert Peel to remove the ladies of her bedchamber, cannot consent to adopt a course which she conceives to be contrary to usage, and which is repugnant to her feelings.”

But it is due to Sir Robert to call attention to the fact, that his demand was made in the most respectful and delicate manner; that the ladies to be removed were only two in number, and had been recently appointed; and that, being one the sister and the other a near relation of two retiring ministers, they could not have been prevented from acquiring and communicating information such as ought not to be divulged to political enemies.*

If Sir Robert Peel was right, from his point of view,

* See McGilchrist's "Life of Palmerston," p. 169-70.

in refusing to head the Cabinet unless he had complete control over the Ladies of the Bedchamber, the Queen was no less right in asserting her prerogative, and in declaring that she would not submit to being separated from those in whom she could trust, and to being surrounded with political spies, if not with personal enemies. We cannot but admire the firmness and discretion which she displayed in the great "Bedchamber Question" in battling for her rights, first with the premier-elect alone, then with him and the Duke of Wellington, and then with Sir Robert Peel again backed by the unanimous opinion of the projected Cabinet*. But while we admire her Majesty's spirit, we fear that her cause was weak. It might, in some cases, be impossible to conduct the affairs of government if the sovereign, and especially a queen, were constantly attended by persons intimately related to the chiefs of the Opposition; and it would, in every instance, be dangerous to attempt the guidance of the State under such conditions.

But the month of August, 1841, brought Peel again into the royal presence as the person who possessed the confidence of the largest portion of thinking men. His management of the Opposition had been admirable, though his want of pliancy and affability never ceased to be a drawback. The expenditure of the Whigs exceeded the revenue more and more, and even with five per cent. added to the assessed taxes they failed to restore the equi-

* Lord Palmerston to Earl Granville, May 10, 1839.

librium required. They could no longer boast of the nation's support, and they resigned the reins of government into abler hands. Lord Melbourne's fascinating manners might no longer endear him to the Queen, and her young and inexperienced mind was no longer permitted to lean on him as her political monitor. Thirty-two years after first entering parliament, Sir Robert Peel became a second time premier, and achieved a more complete mastery over the House of Commons than any other minister had done since Pitt in 1784.

The staff which surrounded him was worthy of its general. There was the great Duke, present in spirit at every office though holding no special one. There was Lyndhurst, as able in debate as versed in law; Aberdeen, prudent and high-minded, with an intimate knowledge of the foreign affairs which he administered. There was Ellenborough with his brilliant speeches, and Stanley with all his Homeric taste and classical rhetoric. There was Sir James Graham, fertile in argument; and Gladstone, running over with generous sympathies, and glorying in the prospect of a brighter and a better age.* These great men with their associates were a school of thought. By whatever name they might be called, their policy was essentially new. It was a memorable transition—a fusion of old ideas with youthful aspirations, and a safe harbinger of good things to come. The composition of the Corn-Law-Repeal cabinet is here given in full:—

* See "Fletcher's Parliamentary Portraits," 3rd series, p. 204.

First Lord of the Treasury, Sir Robert Peel ;
Lord Chancellor, Lord Lyndhurst ;
President of the Council, Lord Wharncliffe ;
First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Haddington ;
Lord Privy Seal, the Duke of Buckingham ;
Home Secretary, Sir James Graham ;
Foreign Secretary, the Earl of Aberdeen ;
Colonial Secretary, Lord Stanley ;
President of the Indian Board, Lord Ellenborough ;
Secretary at War, Sir Henry Hardinge ;
President of the Board of Trade, the Earl of Ripon ;
Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Goulburn ;
Paymaster-General, Sir Edward Knatchbull ;
Vice-President of the Board of Trade, not in the cabinet,
Mr. William Ewart Gladstone.

Five months did Sir Robert give to the study of the measures he had to propose. He could not be induced to act hastily, for to supply the deficit of the revenue and to lighten the burden of the people was no easy problem to solve. He was keenly alive to the distresses of the working classes, and he always aimed at their relief. His great design was to improve their moral through their material condition. One of his earliest proposals was for laying a tax of 3 per cent. on all incomes above £150 a year. William Pitt had levied an income-tax of 10 per cent. in 1798, and though many grumbled at Peel's more moderate demand, it was granted by parliament. His

reduction of duties on foreign imports was immense, and his adoption of Mr. Huskisson's views on Free Trade was more marked than ever. He set the nations of Europe the noble example of relying for their finances on other means than heavy taxes on imports.

"I firmly believe," he said, "that the example which England is now setting will ultimately prevail. But if we find that our example is not followed by foreign nations, still this ought not, in my opinion, to operate as a discouragement to us. It is for the interest of this country to buy cheap, whether other countries will buy cheap from us or no. Not only, therefore, will our principles be immediately profitable to us, but the example we set must ultimately insure that general application of them, which will confer reciprocal benefit both on ourselves and on all those who are wise enough to follow it."

As regards the Corn Laws, Sir Robert would for the present go no farther than modifying the sliding-scale of duties in a liberal direction. The maximum protective duty, which had been twenty-seven shillings a quarter, when British wheat was under sixty shillings, was reduced to twenty shillings a quarter; and this was to take effect only when wheat was sold under fifty-one shillings. After long discussion this modification was adopted, though the partizans of protection clamoured for higher duties all up the sliding-scale; though Cobden and the Radicals demanded total abolition of duties; and though Lord John Russell and the Whigs proposed, instead of

that sliding-scale, a fixed duty of eight shillings a quarter. But Sir Robert's measure was only experimental, and it led on to a more sweeping change. It was the result, as Lord Palmerston rightly observed, not of five months' study merely, but of long previous meditation—of days and 'nights given to the works of Ricardo and Adam Smith, of M'Culloch, Senior, and Mill.

The Corn-Law League exerted a powerful influence on Peel's politics, and its rise and progress were remarkable. The town of Bolton, with its fifty thousand inhabitants, was plunged into the deepest distress by the closing of thirty out of fifty factories. A fourth of the houses were tenantless, children died of hunger in their mothers' arms, and fathers deserted the families which they were unable to feed. A lecture was to be delivered in the theatre on the Corn Laws, but the lecturer broke down and was unable to proceed. Loud discontent ensued, and violence would have been committed had not a young surgeon named Paulton started to his feet and addressed the multitude in place of the old and embarrassed Dr. Burney. His address on the Corn Laws was impetuous and eloquent. He denounced them as a selfish monopoly, a fertile source of misery and starvation. He was entreated to repeat his lecture at Bolton, and was thence invited to lay his views before the public at Manchester, and in the principal manufacturing districts. More than twenty-five thousand persons at Manchester signed a declaration hostile to those laws; the *Anti-Bread-Tax Circular* was

published as their organ, and £50,000 were subscribed for a staff of lecturers and for other means of propagating their opinions.

Richard Cobden, a calico-printer, possessed of riches, of keen intellect, and of powerful utterance, soon headed the movement, and transferred the centre of action from Manchester to London. Here he founded the Anti-Corn-Law League, disconnected it from the Chartists, and with a number of able colleagues, addressed large masses of educated persons from the boards of Drury Lane and Covent Garden Theatres, which were hired by the apostles of free trade. Meetings of the League were held in most counties and towns in the kingdom, and the sum of £100,000 was raised to carry out its object. Many farm-labourers, particularly in Dorsetshire, lent their aid, declaring that the distress in agricultural was hardly less than in manufacturing districts.

Sir Robert could not but take these things deeply to heart. Yet he had no notion of being intimidated, nor would he for the present propose any extensive change in the obnoxious laws. He did not believe that they were the sole, or even the chief, cause of the distress which prevailed, and in this he was right. We have seen long and bitter suffering in the country since those laws have been repealed; nor has the change which their abolition has produced been so great as was feared on one side and hoped on the other. Our farmers and landlords are not ruined, but neither is our bread cheap. The

editor of the "Wealth of Nations" predicted that so it would be.*

Year after year Peel voted uniformly for the grant to Maynooth, made by Pitt in 1795, and there is little doubt that he would have carried out still further the intentions of the government at the time of the Union, if O'Connell had not so vehemently demanded its repeal. Not that the great patriot should lightly be blamed. No wonder that he and the people who hung upon his lips have been driven from one act of phrensy to another in the hope, hitherto vain, of obtaining a union which should really amalgamate them with England, or a repeal which should set them free from rulers who will not be just.† No wonder the Emmetts and Fitzgeralds were succeeded by Repealers, and Smith O'Brien with the Irish Confederation by Stephens and Fenianism. "I know that I have done all I could," said Peel, in reply to one of Shiel's powerful harangues. But it was not true. He could with his master mind have completed the work which he and Wellington had begun so valiantly in 1829. "I had a hope," he continued, "that there was a gradual abatement of animosities on account of religious differences. I thought I saw, even in the intercourse of members of this House, a kindly and reciprocal feeling. I thought I saw the gradual influence of those laws which removed the political disabilities of the Roman Catholics, and established civil equality."

* See McCulloch's Note X. to Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations," p. 528.

† Written in 1867.

Civil equality, Sir Robert, was not enough. Men are more in earnest about their religious even than about their civil rights. The latter being restored, the concession of the former became more imperative, and the withholding of them the more dangerous. Till justice in ecclesiastical matters was administered, it was vain for you to hope that the social and commercial condition of Ireland would improve, or that English capitalists would make that island, instead of foreign countries, their field of speculation. If you, who passed Emancipation, and who were soon to abolish the Corn Laws; if you, whose authority and wisdom could have borne down all opposition, had disendowed (at the death of each incumbent) those parishes only in which there were not twenty Protestants, we should not now in the year 1867 hear a Protestant bishop* declare that in Cashel there are twenty-five benefices with only 303 Protestants, and vast districts where the Church people are only two per cent. of the population; nor would a Catholic bishop† be proposing, with scarcely a chance of being listened to seriously, that the revenues of the Establishment in Ireland should be paid into the imperial treasury, and thence distributed for the support of different religions in proportion to their numerical strength. Such humiliating admissions, such desponding proposals, would have had no place in our day, if you had initiated a better order of things.

* Bishop of Down. *Pall Mall Gazette*, March 23, 1867.

† Dr. Moriarty, Bishop of Kerry.

Nay, if you had done this, you would have obviated the forty-five monster meetings in favour of Repeal; you would have had no need to arrest O'Connell, and still less to release him after arrest and trial.

The monster meetings which were assembled on the hill of Tara, the Curragh of Kildare, and the rath of Mullaghmast were to be followed by one to be held at Clontarf on the 8th of October, 1843. But the Peel Cabinet, having first forbidden it, commenced a State prosecution for high treason against O'Connell and the other ringleaders. Though the sentence of fine and imprisonment pronounced against the Agitator was reversed on an appeal to the House of Lords, the prosecution completely answered its purpose; broke up the prestige and magic power of Daniel O'Connell; moderated his language; exhausted the funds of the Repeal Association; and slackened every effort in Ireland for undoing the work of the Union, and for setting up in Dublin a rival parliament, which it might be very difficult, if not impossible, to preserve in harmony with that in Westminster.

Sir Robert's ideas about "justice to Ireland" appear in our day as strange as the now exploded tenets which he held on the propriety of duels. Whatever may have been his opinion of duelling in the abstract, he, like his friend the Duke of Wellington, did not hesitate to demand an apology as a preliminary to a challenge whenever he thought his honour was assailed. When a young man he dealt thus with the Liberator, and would have done

the same with the *Liberator's* second, Mr. Lidwill, had not friends interfered. In maturer life again he sent a hostile message to Dr. Lushington and to Mr. Hume—the first an ecclesiastical judge, and the other an “entirely peaceable and prudent gentleman.” General de Lacy Evans, indeed, then member for Westminster, strongly advised the pacific member for Durham, Mr. Joseph Pease, the Quaker, to be very careful of his words, “or as sure as fate he would be the next person called out by the warlike premier.”*

In his foreign policy Peel was guided chiefly by the advice of Lord Aberdeen, whose qualifications for the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs were of the highest order. The views of Louis Philippe and M. Guizot were perfectly reflected in this statesman, inasmuch as he laboured constantly to promote peace and justice in our relations with other states. By the joint efforts of the cabinets of the Tuileries and St. James's the difference which had arisen between the two countries relative to the right of search for the suppression of the slave trade was brought to a happy issue; and the search, being thought no longer useful, was abandoned in 1845. It seemed in many stages of the negotiation to be doubtful whether the foolish national prejudices and passions of the past would revive in all their bitterness on both sides, or whether the wiser feelings of social brotherhood would prevail. The mutual visits of the two sovereigns at Windsor and the

* “*Life of Peel*” (Routledge, 1850), p. 131.

Château d'Eu helped to cement the union of France and England, and the affair of Tahiti, in which the waters of strife were stirred by the hands of Protestant missionaries, was, by M. Guizot's skilful management,* made the means of establishing more firmly in Europe the principle of religious toleration.

Many fears were excited on this side of the Channel when the Prince de Joinville and Marshal Bugeaud routed the forces of the Emperor of Morocco by sea and land, and seemed to be on the point of extending the French dominions to the coast opposite Gibraltar. But the fears proved groundless. The rulers of France were satisfied then, as they and we also are satisfied now, that Mussulman States are languishing and must ultimately fall. But they do not intend nor wish to hasten that extinction by craft or violence, nor to spoliage the Turks with a selfish aim. If Christian powers were to act thus, they would in effect adopt the policy by which Mahomet and his successors established their sway. The Ottoman Empire will go to pieces. The Turks will die out of Europe. "Many things are possible; one thing is inconceivable—that they should, as a nation, accept civilisation; and in default of it, that they should be able to stand their ground against the encroachments of Russia, the interested and contemptuous patronage of Europe, and the hatred of their subject populations."†

* See Guizot's "Memoirs of Peel," pp. 168—172.

† "Lectures on the History of the Turks." Newman. p. 280.

Like a true statesman, Sir Robert Peel included in each of his measures the germ of another, and often gave as much time and attention to a detail as other men would have given to a comprehensive scheme. In 1844 he proposed the revision of the Bank Charter, and received the entire support of the Whigs. He had begun the work in 1819, in opposition to his father and to the votes which he had himself given at an earlier period ; and it was with peculiar satisfaction that he completed his project after a lapse of twenty-five years. He also, in the midst of fierce resistance, increased the annual grant of £9,000 to Maynooth College, and this he did in the same spirit as that which had actuated William Pitt fifty years before, to improve the education of the Roman Catholic priesthood in Ireland, and to conciliate the people by a trifling compensation for a long-standing and deeply-rooted system of injustice. Mr. Roebuck and Mr. Cobden voted for the increased grant. Mr. Bright, as a Dissenter, opposed it ; and the task of its defence in the Commons fell principally to Mr. Goulburn, Mr. Gladstone, Lord Lincoln, Mr. Sidney Herbert, and Sir James Graham.

The grant was kindly intended and thankfully received, but it did not produce so many salutary effects as the government expected. It was a small gift meant to cover a large debt, and it was followed by the endowment of Sir James Graham's famous "godless colleges" at Cork, Belfast, and Galway. They were to provide secular instruction for all, leaving religion to the spontaneous

efforts of the various denominations. O'Connell lifted up his voice against the colleges; and the question of mixed education which they involved, being referred to Rome, was solved by the Pope in a sense unfavourable to the government scheme.

Sir Robert Peel, meanwhile, like a knight-errant, moved onward through the land as a redresser of grievances. Sometimes he ran his lance against a windmill, as many a good knight has done before him. Sometimes he reaped the reward of ridicule or of scorn for his pains, but his aim was not so much to earn applause as to promote justice between man and man. Protestant commissioners only had possessed the right of authorising or of prohibiting the legacies and gifts made to Catholic institutions, but these he superseded by a mixed commission of which half were Catholics. The Unitarians, the Presbyterians, and the Jews also were grateful to him for more lenient measures than before being enacted in their behalf; and the factory children have reason to this day to bless him and Sir James Graham, for protecting them against the selfish and cruel exactions of their employers, and limiting their labour to ten hours a day, with two hours and a half for meals and school. His opponents, however, often complained of his conduct as imperious, and even his friends fretted when he refused them the free use of their judgment in questions which they considered of minor importance. In June, 1844, the House of Commons, in Peel's absence, adopted an amendment respecting the reduction of sugar

duties, which the premier afterwards induced them—it may almost be said obliged them—to rescind.

Mr. Disraeli, on this occasion, attacked Sir Robert with his most biting irony. "I really think," he said, in allusion to a previous decision of the House which had been cancelled, "I really think to rescind one vote during the session is enough. I don't think in reason we ought to be called on to endure this degradation more than once a year. The right honourable baronet has joined in the anti-slavery cry; but it seems that his horror of slavery extends to every place except the benches behind him. There the gang is still assembled, and there the thong of the whip still sounds. If the whip were less heard there, the right honourable baronet's conduct would be more consistent with his professions."

Strains of sarcasm and of reproach were sometimes observed to issue from the benches in the premier's rear. He was pointed out as a great parliamentary middle-man—as a minister who plundered one party and bamboozled the other, till, having gained a position to which he was not entitled, he cries out, "Let us have no party questions, but fixity of tenure."

To these invectives Peel made no reply. His acts, he thought, pleaded their own defence. His finance was success itself. The receipts from April, 1844, to the same month in 1845 exceeded the expenditure by £5,000,000. The income-tax was continued, but the import duties on four hundred and thirty articles were entirely abolished.

Foreign products and manufactures were thus brought into competition with those of our country ; the system of commercial protection was relaxed, and the premier was placed in a position to make a grand experiment. His aim was not to amass large savings in the treasury, nor to liquidate the national debt, but to be able to test the accuracy of the scientific conclusions which affirmed the practicability of doing away with the Corn Laws. Having a large surplus in hand, he should be equal to any emergency in case the revenue might sustain unforeseen shocks, or in case it might be needful that the government should assist those whose private interests had suffered severely in the change from Protection to Free Trade. That some temporary embarrassments would ensue was certain, and no prudent statesman would propose so momentous a repeal without being prepared to bear the brunt of a partial failure.

It is now well known that before the potato disease appeared in Ireland Sir Robert Peel had made up his mind as to the impolicy of maintaining the Corn Laws. His silence was ominous. It irritated his Tory friends, and it provoked Lord John Russell and Mr. Disraeli to bitter taunts. Mr. Cobden's speech, when moving for a committee to inquire into the causes of agricultural distress, has become a matter of history. It was distributed through the land by cart-loads ; Sir Robert Peel himself was moved by it, and though he voted in silence against the motion, neither he nor the House ever forgot

its solemn counsel to the aristocracy to preserve the deep-rooted prejudice, if such it may be called, which exists in their favour in this country by the same means with which their fathers acquired it "in other days, when the battle and the hunting fields were the tests of manly vigour." "It was not," Mr. Cobden said, "by obstructing the spirit of the age that such influence could be retained, but rather by taking the lead in that advance which is calculated to knit nations more together in the bonds of peace, by means of commercial intercourse."

Mr. Sidney Herbert was the premier's spokesman on this occasion, and an expression which he used about agricultural representatives coming whining to parliament brought down the full weight of Mr. Disraeli's sarcasm. He charged Sir Robert with taking refuge in "arrogant silence, treating the House with haughty frigidity," sending down his valet to say, in the gentlest manner, "We can have no whining here," and concluded by expressing his belief that a Conservative government was "an organised hypocrisy." In reply to this Peel quoted a passage from one of Mr. Disraeli's speeches in 1842, in which he had declared that Sir Robert, in proposing his Tariff, "was in exact, permanent, and perfect consistency with the principles of Free Trade laid down by Mr. Pitt." Having thus disposed of the charge of clinging to power, and of forgetting the pledges that he had given in Opposition, Sir Robert Peel wound up by saying, with all the

scorn common to rival statesmen, that he held Mr. Disraeli's attack in the same estimation in which he had held his panegyric.

The sufferings of the people in the autumn of 1845 affected powerfully the plans of the government. The harvest was late and scanty; the potatoes failed in many parts of England and Scotland, while in Ireland the corpses of those who had perished of hunger and famine-fever lay in the churchyards unburied, to be devoured by dogs and crows. To hinder by protective laws the free ingress of foreign food and grain at such a crisis seemed perfect infatuation, and Peel, whose mind had long been set loose from protective theories, now yielded willingly to the pressure of circumstances. Lord John Russell helped him to this decision by declaring himself a convert to total abolition, though he had for many years contended for a low but fixed duty on corn from abroad. The Queen even summoned Lord John to Osborne to form a cabinet, but he was compelled to forego the task in consequence of disunion among his followers.*

Sir Robert, therefore, was left to achieve his victory, and a more singular one has rarely been achieved. Had he been more courteous, and more communicative with the members of his party, he might have brought many of them into his counsels. But they remembered how cold and self-involved he had been with them, and they deserted him when he most needed their support. One

* Guizot, "Memoirs of Peel," p. 265.

hundred and twelve only of the three hundred and sixty members who ranged themselves under his banner in 1841, could be induced to vote with him on the abolition of the Corn Laws in 1846. The measure was carried mainly by the Whigs and Radicals, and the Conservatives who remained hostile determined to take their revenge on the premier as soon as possible. In the Upper House the Duke of Wellington deprecated resistance on the ground that the bill was to last only till 1849, and that the sense of the country would therefore be taken at a general election before the question of the Corn Laws could be finally settled.

An opportunity of displacing the premier soon occurred. The factious and turbulent agitation for Repeal in Ireland had failed in its object, and this circumstance, together with the famine and the alarm which it caused, had made outrages on life and property in that country painfully frequent. Such offences in 1844 had risen to 1,495, and in 1845 to 3,642. They were still on the increase, especially in Limerick, Leitrim, Clare, Roscommon, and Tipperary. As usual in Irish affairs, the government, instead of redressing the ills complained of, brought in a fresh bill for the repression of violence and disorder. It had passed the Lords and the first reading in the Commons; but in the second reading the exasperated Protectionists joined the Whigs and Radicals to punish what they called the treason of the premier. He was left in a minority of seventy-three votes,

and was compelled to resign. In retiring from office Sir Robert Peel, to use Mr. Cobden's words, "carried with him the esteem and gratitude of a larger number of the population of this empire than ever followed any minister that was hurled from power." The dignity of his bearing throughout the whole of the long period of the Corn-Law conflict was beyond all praise, and when united with his perseverance, firmness, and great ability, it suffices to rank him among the greatest of our premiers. He had not, it is true, the fire of genius. He struck out no original paths. But painstaking, study, keen discrimination, and a judgment nicely balanced, enabled him to achieve such results as genius arrives at by roads that are shorter, but less safe.

Of the measure itself, for which he suffered so unjustly, it is enough to say that after a lapse of little more than twenty years scarcely a person can be found in the kingdom who does not acknowledge its usefulness and its necessity. The concluding words of the speech which he made on announcing his resignation have been inscribed on the pedestal of his statue, and they will be remembered for ages as one of the golden sentences in the history of Free Trade:—

"It may be that I shall leave a name sometimes remembered with expressions of good-will in the abodes of those whose lot it is to labour, and to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow, when they shall recruit their exhausted strength with abundant and untaxed food,

the sweeter because it is no longer leavened with a sense of injustice."

A review of the several administrations which have been formed from Walpole to Peel, will show that nothing can be concluded from the character of a ministry as to the time that it will last, or the measures that it will adopt. Thirty-three cabinets having been in power between the years 1715 and 1846, it appears that about four years may be taken as the average term of a government existence. But ministries which seemed likely to be durable have proved brief, and *vice versâ*. The Shelburne cabinet, with Pitt as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Shelburne receiving support from the King, might have been fairly expected to last more than nine months; and the "Mince-Pie administration" of William Pitt was never expected to live between seventeen and eighteen years. As to measures, when we reflect that Wellington passed Roman Catholic Emancipation, Peel the abolition of the Corn Laws, Mr. Disraeli and Lord Derby Household Suffrage, we shall be slow in predicting of any cabinet that it will either promote or oppose any particular measure.

On the 3rd of July, 1846, Sir Robert Peel was succeeded by Lord John Russell. He retained out of office the same calm and dignity which had marked him when in power. He supported in general the Russell administration, and while he enjoyed honourable repose and large wealth he carefully forbore criticising either his friends or

his foes in an arrogant tone. The services which he had wrought for his country were too manifest, and too well appreciated, to need any reference to them on his part. The distress in Ireland occupied much of his attention ; and when fifty-eight districts were declared to be in a state of famine by the Lord-Lieutenant, when (to take only one example) 5,060, out of 62,000 inhabitants in Skibbereen, died in three months, and 15,000 rose in the morning without knowing how they should get food for the day, when people dying of hunger often sucked the blood of live cattle, when O'Connell (himself near his end) declared in the House that unless effectual relief were provided by parliament one quarter of the whole population would perish, Sir Robert Peel aided the ministry with a zeal becoming one whose greatest public act consisted in cheapening the poor man's bread. Five hundred thousand labourers in Ireland were employed by the government on public works, and thus food was provided for two million persons. Large sums were voted for Irish landowners, to be advanced for the drainage of land and the purchase of seed. The navigation laws, which impeded importation by raising freights, were suspended, and the laws themselves were ultimately abolished in conformity with the principles of Free Trade. The battle with Protectionists had to be fought inch by inch, and Sir Robert Peel was never loath to measure his strength with Lord George Bentinck and the other champions of a short-sighted policy.

When Lord John Russell was earnestly pressing forward his plans of national education, and increasing the grants made annually by parliament for that purpose, Sir Robert warmly supported the views of the cabinet. He was firmly attached to the Anglican Church, but he wished the State to promote education among all sects, and that not merely of a secular kind. He believed "that such an education was only half an education, but with the most important half neglected." He was urgent in pleading for education among Roman Catholics, and for its encouragement by the State. He brought the condition of the Catholic poor of Manchester prominently before the House, and implored aid from government for the instruction of the children of 60,000 or 70,000 Irish resident in "Irish Town." He voted and spoke in favour of the admission of Jews into parliament, and while he professed a deep conviction of the truth of Christianity, he maintained also that "as a legislature, we have no authority to determine religious error, and no commission to punish it." He never could resign the hope of improving the condition of Ireland. As to emigration, he would do no more than encourage it; but the state of landed property in the island appeared to him a proper subject for the interference of parliament. Its public burdens and private debts, its heavy mortgages, the landlord's indifference, and the tenant's sloth, depreciated its value in the market, and reduced its products to a minimum.

The remedy which Peel proposed was of a twofold character. He wished a commission to be appointed to inquire into the matter, with a view to the purchase by government of lands which the proprietors might be willing to sell, and in order to advance also such loans to landowners as would enable them to improve the condition of their farms and tenantry. The ministers at first opposed, but afterwards accepted the proposal. The Encumbered Estates Court was established, and, in the opinion of one writer, it "has done more to remedy the worst social evils of Ireland than all the other laws which parliament has passed since the union of the two legislatures." *

Sir Robert lived little more than a twelvemonth after the measure was finally adopted, but he had the satisfaction of seeing that it worked well, and even surpassed his expectations. It was advisable then, as it is now, that the landed property in Ireland should pass as much as possible into fresh hands, without any isolation of existing rights; that the iniquitous settlements of former ages (such as those made by James I. in Ulster †) should be undone by gentle and legal means; and that the land should, as far as may be, return in course of time into the possession of the children of the soil.

On the 28th of June, 1850, Sir Robert Peel made his

* *Blackwood's Magazine*, vol. lxxxviii., p. 279.

† See Speech of Sir Robert Peel, "Hansard's Parliamentary Debates," March 30, 1849.

last speech. Lord Palmerston had given umbrage to France by his summary proceedings with the little kingdom of Greece. He had warmly supported Mr. Finlay and Don Pacifico in a complaint which they raised against the Greek government, and in their demand for indemnities to be paid on account of injuries which they had received. He even ordered the ports and coasts of Greece to be blockaded, and he raised the blockade only at the instance of France. Lord Stanley in the House of Lords (where he had sat since 1844) vehemently assailed Lord Palmerston's policy, denouncing it as violent towards the weak, and cringing to the strong. It was a policy learnt from Mr. Canning, and based upon a desire to promote constitutional government in other countries. It was often aggressive and interfering, provoking general detestation abroad, and making the influence and interests of this country prevail unduly over those of others. It was therefore decried by the Tories as selfish, designing, and menacing; and it was contrasted with the foreign policy of Lord Aberdeen, whose pacific and conciliating measures contributed so largely to the strength of Sir Robert Peel's administration. Both these noblemen, Aberdeen and Palmerston, became, a few years later, prime ministers, for both were men of mark and renown, born in the same year, 1784, and conversant from their youth with diplomacy and debate, with parliamentary conflicts, and cabinet councils.

Lord Stanley's vote of censure on the ministry was

carried in the House of Lords by a large majority, and if the Commons had concurred in it, Lord Palmerston's officiousness would have been suddenly checked. But the supporters of Lord John Russell in the Lower House were very numerous, and a distinct approval of Lord Palmerston's foreign policy, moved by Mr. Roebuck, was carried by a majority of forty-six. Great anxiety was felt to hear Sir Robert Peel's opinion. No one knew on which side he would vote, for he had generally supported the Whig government since he had ceased to be premier. His speech was remarkable, and was listened to in breathless silence. He refused to acquiesce in any covert reflection on the policy of his former colleague, Lord Aberdeen, protested against Mr. Roebuck's resolution, and declared his belief that the carrying of it would "give a false impression with respect to the dignity and honour of the country," and would establish a principle which could not be put into execution without imminent danger to our best interests. His moral influence was then at its height both in and out of parliament, but his speech did not cause the downfall of the ministers, nor indeed did he desire it. The Conservatives were then a party without leaders, and the Peelites were leaders without a party. The Radicals advocated peace and reform—more peace and more reform than the Whigs approved of. If Lord John Russell and Lord Palmerston had been overthrown, no government sufficiently strong could at that moment have taken their place.

The sun was rising when Sir Robert Peel returned home from the House of Commons, on the 29th of June, 1850. After a few hours' rest, he attended a meeting of the Commission for the Great Industrial Exhibition of the ensuing year. He then mounted his horse for an afternoon's ride in the Park, and was thrown from it when turning up Constitution Hill. The injury which he received was very serious, and aggravated by his extreme restlessness and his refusal to let the surgeons duly examine him. The collar-bone and the fifth rib on the left side were fractured, and after great agony he expired on the 2nd of July. His friend, the Bishop of Gibraltar, attended him in his last moments, while Lady Peel and her children surrounded his bed in silence and in prayer. "God bless you!" was all he was able to utter; after these words he relapsed into his former unconsciousness, and never spoke again.

A prayer was found among his papers, which he had composed and had been in the habit of using regularly: it asked for "a right judgment in all things," "perseverance in the course of duty," and "an entire spirit of self-abnegation." He had desired in his will, made sixteen years before and recently confirmed, that he might be interred in the parish church of Drayton with his father and mother, without any kind of parade. His family therefore declined for his remains the honours of a state funeral which the Queen and the government offered; but a monument was raised to his memory

in Westminster Abbey, and other memorials were decreed to him by the public voice in London, Edinburgh, Leeds, Glasgow, Manchester, and Birmingham. The working classes by penny subscriptions erected a statue of him, and the words already quoted * from his speech on retiring from office were, at Mr. Cobden's suggestion, inscribed on its pedestal. "It is a certain sign of greatness that it obtains recognition at every degree of the social scale, and leaves everywhere, in the cottage as well as in the palace, the traces of its presence upon earth." †

In 1841, Mr. Disraeli, in the last speech delivered by him in the first parliament in which he sat, had spoken of Peel in terms which deserve to be recorded. "Placed," he said, "in an age of rapid civilisation and rapid transition, Sir Robert Peel has adapted the practical character of his measures to the condition of the times. When in power he has never proposed a change which he did not carry, and when in opposition he never forgot that he was at the head of the great Conservative party. He never employed his influence for factious purposes, and has never been stimulated in his exertions by a disordered desire of obtaining office; above all, he has never carried himself to the opposite benches by making propositions by which he was not ready to abide. Whether in or out of office, the right honourable baronet has done his best to make the settlement of the new constitution of England

work for the benefit of the present time and of posterity."*

Though Sir Robert Peel did not distinguish himself as a writer, he had that love of literature which might be expected of one who attained high honours at the University, and without which he could hardly have commanded the attention of cultivated audiences. But his chief pleasure, apart from his parliamentary duties, was in the works of art. He encouraged artists by private acts of kindness and munificence, and he left behind him monuments of his taste in the valuable collection of pictures adorning his town house and the manor of Drayton.

Though ardently attached to the old institutions of the land, Sir Robert Peel had no wish to rise above the rank in which he was born. In vain William IV. offered him an earldom, in vain Queen Victoria held out to him the Order of the Garter. In vain her Majesty proposed after his death to raise his widow, like Mr. Canning's widow, to the peerage, with remainder to her son. Sir Robert had expressly directed that no member of his family should receive any title, distinction, or reward on account of services which he may have rendered to his country. Admirable modesty in the man who carried to a higher point than they had yet reached all the better and nobler tendencies of the English legislature, and who united in himself the scattered excellences of former premiers; who resembled Walpole in his financial skill and his efforts for Free

* McGilchrist's "Life of Benjamin Disraeli," p. 43.

Trade, Stanhope in his spirit of toleration, Pelham in his leniency towards the Jews, Chatham in his stern sense of justice, Pitt in his conciliatory policy towards Ireland, Fox in his zeal for religious equality, and Canning in his generous advocacy of Catholic Emancipation ! But in the lives of prime ministers, as in those of kings, it is distance that lends enchantment to the view ; and it is difficult to dis sever any record of the measures and motives of premiers who have flourished in our own time from those newspaper and paragraph associations which are too familiar and common to the majority of readers to be either dignified or agreeable.

In bringing this series to an end it is pleasing to reflect on the stability of our institutions compared with those of other less-favoured governments during the period that I have imperfectly reviewed. It would be difficult to find another country in which progress has been so persistent, and accomplished with so little internal commotion. Under the administration alike of the sage and pacific Walpole, and of the vain, bustling Duke of Newcastle ; under the eagle-eyed, fiery Chatham, and the silent, indolent Duke of Portland ; under the mighty Pitt and the feeble Addington ; under the intolerance of Perceval, and the safer mediocrity of Lord Liverpool ; the resolute straightforwardness of Wellington, and the slow, secret, thoughtful developments of Peel, we have ever been advancing in the enjoyment of political privileges, and reducing to practice the speculations of social

science. We have seen the power of the people widened without injuring the aristocracy or subverting the throne; we have mitigated the severity of criminal laws without increasing crime; we have substituted specie for paper-money; abolished slavery and monopoly; founded new colonies; enlarged and improved our old ones; provided for the poor; checked mendicity and multiplied labour; made postal and telegraphic communication marvellously easy; given free scope to religious exertion; subjected faults and follies to the tribunal of public opinion; interposed in behalf of oppressed populations; and diminished vice and misery by diffusing through every county and every hamlet the blessings of moral culture and of intellectual training. The march of improvement has known no interruption; and the caution with which its steps have been taken is the best guarantee for their being happily and successfully continued in all their numberless directions.

Perhaps it will be asked why the present series should end with Peel, and not be carried down much nearer to the day in which we live. The obvious reason is that Lord John Russell succeeded Sir Robert Peel in July, 1846, and that he, who now at an advanced age sits among the peers, could not with propriety be made the subject of a biography while still alive. Other premiers, indeed, who followed him have passed away; and when we think of the Earl of Aberdeen, of the Earl of Derby, and Lord Palmerston, as well as of those two illustrious leaders of parties who have been our last prime ministers,

and whose brows are adorned with the laurels of literary fame, we feel that the honour of the English premiership has in these latter years been nobly sustained, and that its high character has suffered no decay. If we compare the catalogue of our prime ministers from the demise of Queen Anne downwards with that of any other country during the same period, we shall see cause to congratulate ourselves on the nation's having been governed by men whose probity and sagacity on the whole have been unrivalled elsewhere. They have clung tenaciously to the old order of things till they were fully persuaded that a new order was better ; and in adopting the new they have wisely taken care to retain as much as possible of the old. They have welded together the venerable past and the hopeful present into a compact and well-proportioned fabric, which will defy the storms of ages if those who shall succeed them only widen and deepen its foundations, and steadily refuse to develop any one part of the edifice at the expense of the others. Ample materials are already in store for future chroniclers of the lives of English premiers, and their annals will, no doubt, be written with satisfaction, and will be read by Englishmen with pleasure not unmixed with pride.

THE END.

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